L D Swamikannu

L. D. SWAMIKANNU PILLAI

A
BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

BY

LEO PROSERPIO, S. J.

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TO MY STUDENTS

OF

ST. ALOYSIUS' COLLEGE, MANGALORE

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FOREWORD

This is neither a voluminous nor a pretentious book. It does not even claim to be called a biography, but just an appreciation of the life and character of a great Catholic layman whose superior gifts cannot be allowed to sink altogether into oblivion. The author is moreover convinced that a true biography of Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai may well be considered outside the realm of probable achievements. However industrious a writer may be, he must necessarily, whenever he approaches the subject, find himself confronted with two insurmountable difficulties. They are the uneventful character of the life of the hero, and the scanty material on which he has to depend for an accurate and complete delineation of his portrait.

The author dedicates his little volume to the students of St. Aloysius' College, Mangalore, to whom in no small measure it belongs. It was at their suggestion that he first wrote a character-sketch of Swamikannu Pillai soon after his death in September 1925. The essay was read at a special meeting of the Literary and Debating Society of the College convened by Professor C. J. Varkey, K. S. G., to honour the memory of one to whom all classes of people seemed anxious to pay their last tribute of love and

admiration. It was later published by G. A. Natesan & Co. in a volume containing sketches of the lives of eminent Christian leaders and entitled "Indian Christians."

The idea to turn his original composition into something like a biography came in response to the request of many friends and admirers of Swamikannu Pillai. As the author prided himself on being one among them, he was easily prevailed upon to undertake the task which he completed in the course of the following year. Before, however, he could give the finishing touches to his work, other occupations, mainly connected with an extension and other improvements of the buildings of St. Aloysius' College, supervened to divert his attention into less literary channels. During the last two years he has enjoyed occasional intervals of leisure which enabled him to unearth his dusty manuscripts and revise them for the press. He confesses that he has spared neither time nor trouble to make the book as worthy of its subject as it was in his power to make it. Yet he offers no apology for the method he has followed, which, though less common in modern biography, is not altogether an innovation. At any rate, in his opinion, he had no alternative in the matter.

A word on the material at his disposal may not be considered wholly out of place. It consisted of *a*) manuscripts of Swamikannu Pillai, viz., notes, some official correspondence and portions of incomplete diaries; *b*) about three hundred private letters written to or by him; *c*) speeches and articles which appeared in newspapers at the time of his death and, in particular, a short account of his life published in the St. Joseph's College Magazine, Trichinopoly.

The author wishes to avail himself of this opportunity to thank all those who have helped him in his undertaking. More especially he offers his heartfelt thanks to Mrs. A. R. Swamikannu for placing at his service the papers of her beloved husband; to Mrs. M. Pais and Miss Julia Pais for allowing him the use of their correspondence with Swamikannu Pillai who was an intimate friend of the family, and for like reasons to Mr. A. Prabalanatha Pillai, B. A., retired Sub-Registrar. He also wishes to thank the Rev. Fr. D. Fernandes, S. J., Professor of St. Aloysius' College, for encouragement when it was most needed, and for going over the typed copy as well as the proof-sheets of the book, and Mr. Varkey, for his generously undertaking its publication.

To conclude, the author desires to state that in writing this biography he has had all the while an ethical purpose in view. He holds that we live to sanctify ourselves and to seek the progress and good of others. If, therefore, his Appreciation of a great and noble Catholic Indian layman can be the means of awakening or strengthening in any of its Christian and non-Christian readers even a passing mood, a desire after a purer life, he will deem himself amply repaid for the otherwise not unpleasant hours he has spent over it.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!

Browning.

"The Hon'ble Diwan Bahadur Louis Dominic Swamikannu Pillai, M. A., LL. B., I. S. O., C. I. E., President of the Legislative Council, died at 7 p. m. on the evening of Thursday, the 10th September 1925, at his residence in Arathoon Road, Royapuram, Madras."

Thus ran the obituary message which, on Telegraph wires, carried to all parts of the Presidency of Madras, and beyond it, the sad news that one of India's distinguished sons was no more. With one voice the press broke forth into a chorus of praise of the man whom the Angel of Death had gathered swiftly to the grave. Outlines of his life of strenuous activity and unremitting toil were

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1 This introduction is a reprint originally forming part of the lecture mentioned in our Foreword. Its style, due to the special circumstances of composition, is admittedly more suited to the platform than to the quiet mood of a reasoned essay. It was, however, thought unnecessary to alter it for, the author believes, an Introduction need not always constitute an integral part of the book to which it is prefixed.

published in all the leading newspapers enclosed within the traditional black borders which custom has made popular for recording our last farewell to those we have loved and admired on earth.

As a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, the Office of the Madras Legislative Council was closed on the 11th, and the flag on the Council Chamber was hoisted half-mast. The Offices of the Registrar, the Deputy Registrar and the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, over whose destinies he had presided for six years, were also closed. On November 5th the Sheriff's Memorial Meeting was held in the Victoria Public Hall. It was a representative gathering of the citizens of the metropolis convened by the Sheriff, Diwan Bahadur S. Bhavanandam Pillai, and presided over by H. E. Viscount Goschen, the Governor of the Presidency. It was a spontaneous, sincere and unanimous recognition of the sterling qualities of the late President by persons who, widely differing from him in creed, principles and aspirations, had met to honour in his rich personality the nearest approach to a moral and intellectual ideal. It was a deliberate and universal homage of the country to 'goodness' more resplendent, because it shone through the many irradiations of genius. We shall not attempt, in these pages, to retail all the minute occurrences of his recorded life, nor to catalogue his utterances; our main purpose is to show that he whose loss we lament, shall long live in the annals of the Province, longer in the hearts of all who knew him intimately because of the happy blend in his person of intellect and character.

L. D. Swamikannu Pillai was born into a period of stirring events. I am not thinking of the new influences

at play in the political arena since the time when the Imperial Government gave the country, in the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme of diarchy, a first instalment of autonomy. Nor of the causes which immediately preceded and necessitated the Reforms. These are but side-issues of forces deep and vast engaged in shaking, for good or for evil, the hoary frame of a civilization thousands of years old. During more than half a century these forces brought change into the changeless East. Young India breathed a new atmosphere intellectually and spiritually. It responded to an intense stimulus, made up of various elements, each of them new and inspiring. To that stimulus must be attributed the unparalleled upward growth in politics, education and social life. Unhappily the mighty movement of the 'Indian Renaissance' has taken a too sudden political turn which may retard in the long run the full realization of the achievements it was destined to produce. Perhaps we are mistaken. Yet it cannot be gainsaid that, on the whole, science and literature, arts and industries have been less productive than politics.

The period has had its great men too. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the founder of the 'Servants of India' and, perhaps, the best constructive statesman, comes first to the mind. To him must be added Bal Gangadhar Tilak who devoted his rare talents and energies to the political redemption of his countrymen; Romesh Chandra Dutt, Indian Historian; Rabindranath Tagore, the poet of world-wide renown; Sir J. C. Bose, the international scientist; Mahatma Gandhi, who, to the shame and confusion of many of us, has chosen to wage a war on the British not with armies and navies, but by prayer and fasting and

suffering. These are some of the most outstanding figures among the "Builders of Modern India."

Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai, though great, has no such title to fame as any one of these. He was no poet or scientist of the first class, no leader in state-craft; he headed no political or religious movement. In brief, he was no hero in the accepted sense of the word. For one thing, as Bernard Shaw remarked in the provocative speech on his seventieth birthday, we moderns "have made an end of the Great Man as the nineteenth century knew him." In England, at any rate, his cult has been abandoned since the days of Gladstone and Tennyson. The Englishman looks now upon his gifted contemporaries as comrades who, for one reason or another, have gained some importance. The days of hero-worship died with Carlyle's apotheosis of the hero. Yet the term has been coupled with the name of Swamikannu Pillai by many friends and admirers standing by his remains before they were lowered into the grave.

From a Memoir aiming at offering a disinterested appreciation of his life and character, even the appearance of exaggeration must be eschewed. All the same, we hasten to affirm that, though no hero, he had the stuff of which heroes are made. Was he, like Browning's Grammarian, a 'high man aiming at a million,' and in the attempt missing 'an unit'? Time is the best historian: no one is entitled to forestall its final verdict on the abiding value of the services rendered by Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai to his country. The history of Indian Chronology and the Annals of the Legislative Council of the Madras Presidency of which he was the first Secretary, the second nominated and the first elected

President, when they come to be written, will look incomplete and poor without a chapter dedicated to his name. More than this, his figure stands out prominent in the golden leaves of the Book of Life, which Angels keep, and which none but the best of us may read. If he failed to achieve greater things, if he must be counted one of Earth's 'broken arcs' which can never be made 'perfect round', it was not for lack of genius, but because of the lack of patronage, or what amounts to the same thing, the lack of a powerful organization or body of friends to push him up, and because of the external circumstances of birth and religion, which, from the very outset, prescribed bounds to the possibilities of the part he was destined to play.

For, in his case, it cannot be too much emphasized that he came of humble parentage. Despite his many lucrative appointments in after years, which sheer want almost forced him to court, and despite the simplicity of his manner of life, poverty continued, in a way, to dog his career throughout. As was remarked by his life-long friend, the late Dr. Swaminathan, his scrupulous integrity made it impossible for him to make a fortune while his generosity even to distant relations, which was sometimes abused by their opening accounts to his credit in the different shops, kept him always in debt. In a letter to a friend, dated 24th December 1923, he writes: "I am frightened to think I am running so fearfully in debt with you. Besides the Rs. 100 which I hope to pay in January and in February, I hope to pay Rs. 500 in March out of my pay (it will be only Rs. 2,000 against Rs. 1,500 which I now draw). My February increment goes to X...." And likewise, a large share of the remaining money went, each month, to the many people who depended on him.

Not less pathetic are the few lines he wrote in a footnote to a page of his journal of spiritual thoughts and prayers: "I can open no more accounts with Banks. I cannot draw a cheque for Rs. 1,000, but I can open a fresh account with Heaven: I can make fixed deposits in that bank, and the one kind of account is easier when the other kind is non-existent."[1] It is no wonder that this great man, who drew a salary of Rs. 2,000, could write in the last letter to his Spiritual Director on July 30th, 1925: "....This morning a curious reflection occurred to me. I am perturbed in mind because my family is not well provided for. But I know as a matter of Faith that after death I shall be perfectly satisfied with God's actual disposal of my family."

As to his religion, it would be unfair to hold that it stood in the way of promotion. From humble official beginnings he climbed in fact to all but the loftiest rung of the ladder of office. Yet no one will deny that to be a Catholic, in a country like India, is no recommendation to preferment. If he rose high, his success was entirely the outcome of personal effort. As his successor in the Presidential chair of the Legislative Council, Mr. M. Ruthnaswamy, C. I. E., put it; "L. D. Swamikannu Pillai like Burke could say he was not cradled and dandled into office. He was challenged at every step and had to produce the passport of his efficient and hard work, before he was allowed to pass on."

> A combination and a form indeed,
> Where every good did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.
>
> *Hamlet, III, iv, 55-57.*

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1 Spiritual Diary, 1909.

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

J. B. Priestley[1] tells us that the facts of George Meredith's parentage, birth and early life were not made known to the public until after the death of the great novelist who, during his life, had not only concealed, but also wilfully surrounded, them with romance. This extraordinary behaviour is not so uncommon among eminent men of letters. To the vast majority of our readers it will come as a surprise to learn that L. D. Swamikannu Pillai was in a way one of them, and that the place of his birth has remained, up to the present, an unrevealed secret. In the customary chorus of panegyrics published after his death it has been consistently stated that he was born in Somanoor, a small insignificant village some fifteen miles from the town of Coimbatore. No writer has taken the trouble to verify the accuracy of this statement. The Government Service Book and the Madras Year Book, compiled by Swamikannu Pillai himself in 1923, give the year but not the place of his birth.

These were suggestive omissions which from the first invited the attention of the writer to a more searching

1 J. B. Priestley—George Meredith, Chap. I.

investigation of the matter and led him eventually to the unveiling of the family mystery. Meredith's romantic tale was probably nothing more than a gesture, though some critics would have us believe that throughout life this great philosophic poet and novelist, this subtle moralist, was simply ashamed of his connection with a naval outfitter's shop. Be that as it may, such was not the case with Swamikannu Pillai. The poverty and humble extraction of his parents were too well known to the public and, in a country like India where obscurity of birth is often written large on one's forehead, they could scarcely have been hushed up even by a man more worldly and more adventurous than our hero. Indeed Swamikannu Pillai never made any secret of his poverty nor attempted to weave a romance around his cradle. He was simply reticent, and this for reasons of an extraordinary delicacy of feeling towards his beloved father.

As we shall presently narrate, the latter had fallen in early life under the influence of Protestants, had embraced their creed, and, in consequence of this step, had his first-born child baptized in a Protestant Church. It was this blot on the family's escutcheon that weighed heavily on the Catholic soul of Swamikannu Pillai, and made him anxious to avoid any reference to the subject of his nativity. He resolutely made up his mind to keep from general knowledge a secret which the obscurity of his birth had helped to throw into the background. Personally we wish he had been less uncommunicative. It would, once for all, have cleared the atmosphere of mist and mystery which throughout his life hung around the legend of his early days. To screen the reputation of a beloved father, he was content to suffer from the gossip of

idlers, and to draw a veil over particulars which, because of the uncontroverted claims of history, and because men like Swamikannu Pillai are public property, we do not think it unseemly to make known in these pages.

Louis Dominic Swamikannu Pillai was born on the 4th of February 1865 at Madras.[1] His parents, like those of many a celebrated man, were poor. His Father Mr. Louis Pillai, *alias* Gnanapragasam Pillai, hailed from Somanoor. In early youth he had been a student of the Seminary at Pondicherry, but was compelled to abandon the ecclesiastical career on account of the straitened circumstances of his family, and in 1856, he settled down in his native village as a clerk in the Taluk Cutchery under Mr. Cherry, a Forest Officer, and was married a few years later to one Siluvaimuthammal. Of her, as of most women in India, we know practically nothing save that she was of a very lovable nature, of a deep religious faith and something of a scholar in Tamil. With a view to enhancing his small earnings, Louis Pillai undertook to teach French to the children of some European settlers in those parts. He fell at this time under Protestant influence and was advised to emigrate to Madras, where, after a period of theological training, he worked, between the years 1861 to 1866, with the Rev. Mr. Simpson then in charge of the Sullivan's Garden, Royapettah.

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1 There are at least five different dates claiming the privilege of Swamikannu Pillai's birth. They are: 4th February, 1st April, 4th April, 6th and 10th April 1865. They have all appeared in print. The first of them, 4th February 1865 is, according to some letters received by the author from near relatives of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai, the most probable. We have adopted it against the authority of the Madras Year Book for 1923 of which L. D. Swamikannu Pillai was the editor, and which gives as date of his birth, the 1st of April 1865. It may be that the editor of the Year Book did not think it worth while to alter a date that had already found its way in public documents.

Through the exertions of Mr. N. Subramanian—a former Administrator-General of Madras and a devout Protestant—who at the time was preparing for his Arts course, the child Swamikannu Pillai was baptized in the Protestant church. There is one living authority, Mr. Thamby Pillai, Secretary of the Catholic Indian Association of Southern India, who had heard from the lips of Dr. Subramaniam himself the circumstances attending the birth as well as the Baptism of the new-born infant. In vain were the protests of the mother, unwilling to see any of her children brought up outside the Catholic Faith. She, in the end, wrote to her brother-in-law, the Rev. Rayappa Nather of Coimbatore, acquainting him with all the particulars of the event. The priest came to Madras and succeeded in having the boy, then one year and a half old, re-baptized in St. Peter's Church, Royapuram. He also recommended Mr. Louis Pillai to Rev. Fr. T. A. Duraisamy Nather, parish priest of Vepery. The latter had known the ex-seminarist very well at Pondicherry, and was glad to employ him as a teacher in the parochial school.

In 1870, the whole family, consisting of father, mother, two sons, Muthukannu and Swamikannu, and a daughter, Gnanatheebathammal, left Madras for good, and returned to their native village. Mr. Louis Pillai was first employed for a short time in a transit service which was plying between Podanur and Mettupalaiyam: he, later, emigrated with the children to Ootacamund, and was entertained as a low-paid teacher in the Breeks Memorial School of that town. Young Dominic was sent to learn the three R's in the Catholic parochial school managed by the Rev. C. Biolley, a venerable priest now over ninety years old. Let us, in passing, pay a tribute of love,

perchance the only one recorded in print, to this dear veteran soldier in God's army, who spent the best and longest portion of his days in the mission field without once revisiting France, his beloved country. We do it the more willingly, because there is reason to believe that Fr. Biolley took a special interest in young Swamikannu and recommended him and his brother Muthukannu to the Jesuits at Negapatam on the East Coast. The two boys travelled from Ootacamund to Coimbatore on foot—there was no railway in the early seventies—and the story goes that the amusement of rolling limes along the road helped them to walk the long distance. They joined St. Joseph's College at the beginning of 1874.

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St. Joseph's had not in those days acquired the fame and reputation which it enjoys at present. It is now one of the most flourishing Colleges of Southern India and compares favourably with the very best of the Madras Presidency in numerical strength, in excellence of mental and moral education and in the glorious record of academic achievements. But all this was as yet far off. When in September 1844, six years after the New Mission of Madura was started, Fr. Audibert went to Negapatam to open a school for Europeans, he had but one pupil in the boarding house which made the good Rector remark with a touch of humour: "La maison marche comme un seul homme."

This is not the place to enter into an historical account of the humble infancy of St. Joseph's at Negapatam whose progressive career has been chequered beyond the ordinary.

In 1858 Fr. Bedin was appointed Rector of the School. It had been raised, by this time, to the status of College. He extended the sphere of studies and harmonized them with the movement and progress of education which in Southern India dates especially from this epoch. It is well known how, in 1835, Lord Macaulay advocated the education of India by imparting to her the science and language of her rulers. In pursuance of the new policy schools and colleges were multiplied all over the land and, in 1857, the first Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were founded. But in spite of the modifications introduced by Fr. Bedin, the plan of studies at St. Joseph's remained essentially the same. The order of classes and the course of studies resembled those of Jesuit Colleges in France. Independent of Government and the University of Madras, the College had all liberty as to its methods of teaching and the choice of authors to be explained. But these were dear-bought privileges, for they deprived it of all subsidy from Government and of the prestige which the patronage of the civil authorities gave to the other schools. Moreover the pupils of St. Joseph's were incapable, at the end of their course, of passing the University examinations. These were grave inconveniences. It was not, however, till the year 1866, under the Rectorship of Fr. Batut, that St. Joseph's College sought and obtained affiliation to the University of Madras.[1]

Swamikannu Pillai joined St. Joseph's at the beginning of 1874 and was placed in the second class, A *section*, corresponding to the Second Form of the modern system of education. It is here that the nine-year old lad began to lay the foundation of that deep scholarship for which

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1 The Mangalore Magazine, Vol. II, No. 10.

he has been deservedly praised. There was nothing very remarkable in his outward appearance. One of his teachers has left a description of him at this period. "He was not a very big man then, just a sprightly little boy with a pair of sparkling eyes full of life and cheerfulness, who had already contracted the inveterate habit of being, though the smallest of the lot, the first boy of his class."

From the first, two influences were at work in moulding his intellect and character. He soon felt the strength of the classical tradition built up by such humanists as were the Jesuit Fathers at Negapatam. The names of Fr. Bernard, or Dr. Barrow, who had been a Don of high distinction at Oxford, of Fr. Bruni, Fr. Gallo and Frs. Abreu and Bangaru were often on his lips in after life. A charming little story which was then current at Negapatam will not be unwelcome. Dr. Barrow had undertaken to teach Latin to a class of Matriculation students, and set about the task in the regular Oxford style with the result that the students, who found his learning much above their heads, petitioned that a young Indian scholastic, Fr. Bangaru, should teach them instead. It was further added that the change was made much to the chagrin of poor Dr. Barrow, but greatly to the advantage of the students, all of whom passed.

From the list of eminent men who exercised a powerful influence on Swamikannu Pillai, we must not omit the name of the late Fr. Auguste Jean, one of the most enthusiastic Latin scholars of the day. As Rector of the College Fr. Jean had ample opportunities to come in contact with the young student: he was struck by his extraordinary mental gifts, and greatly encouraged him in the study of Latin. He seems to have contributed the largest share to the boy's

intellectual development, so much so that, despite all the honours heaped upon him in mature life, Swamikannu Pillai continued to take pride in having been the pupil of the Rev. Fr. A. Jean. On September 18, 1921 he wrote to his life-long friend Mr. A. Prabalanatha Pillai: "If you have read the Madras Mail of 17—9—1921, you will have learnt that dear Fr. Jean passed away at Shembaganur on 16—9—1921. With him passed away a great deal that I have loved and honoured."[1]

The other influence, altogether spiritual, was derived from his bond of union with the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of which he became from the start a junior member, and with its Director, the Rev. Fr. Eyraud. For, it must be well borne in mind, that no appreciation of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai can be complete, if it neglects to take stock of the spiritual aspect of his life. Intellect and religion were the two pillars on which rested the structure of his future greatness.

The Jesuits were quick to realize that young Swamikannu was not to be ranked with the average boys one meets at College, and that, even thus early, he was a coming man. His splendid abilities made an impression also on his fellow students. He was the quickest learner ever seen at the school. and this coupled with the fact that he had already received from his father a good grounding in Latin and French made him often the centre of wonder and admiration. He was full of life and heartiness withal, of fun and frolic, the pleasantest comrade whose company was much sought after by everyone.

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[1] Fr. A. Jean is the author of a popular Latin Grammar which has gone through three editions and also of a Companion to the School Grammar in the form of exercises.

In those early days of St. Joseph's at Negapatam the Fathers used to hold school *concertations*. Each class was divided into two rival camps, say the Romans and the Carthaginians, with the two best boys as their representative leaders. Every now and then a subject for discussion was chosen beforehand, and on an appointed day, the staff and the students of the institution would assemble in the big hall to witness the match of juvenile intellects. Little Swamikannu Pillai was quite at home in such contests. He had a perfect mastery of the Latin grammar, its declensions, pronouns, irregular verbs, its higher idiomatic elegances, and it was a pleasure to see him unravel difficult questions put to him by bigger boys and come off victorious from the ordeal. Nowadays the century-old 'camp system,' is held to be out of date, yet we may be permitted to doubt whether the improved methods of pedagogy offer a more potent stimulus to the mental activities of the boys. The dominant place assigned to 'method' and the craze for precocious specialization have unmistakably been attended by a proportionate decrease of initiative and thoroughness. Under the influence of the new Psychology, educationists have laid greater stress on the development of the art of teaching than on the labour and toil involved in the process of learning. The boys have been taught to grow wise comfortably and by short-cuts. Anyway L. D. Swamikannu Pillai is characteristically a product of the Old School often identified with the 'Ratio Studiorum,' or the Educational System of the Jesuits.

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* *

In December 1878 he sat for the Matriculation

Examination. Much was expected of him, and we suspect, it was with some feeling of disappointment that the results were received. He had secured the third place in the Presidency, a splendid achievement for a boy of thirteen, though, perhaps, not up to the expectations of his teachers and companions. The late Rev. Fr. J. Santiago, S. J., who was at the time teaching in St. Joseph's College thus narrates the event: "The Matriculation results of that year were particularly gratifying for our College. The general results in the Presidency revealed an awful slaughter of innocents: out of some two thousand candidates hardly three hundred 'got through'....It was therefore something of a triumph for St. Joseph's when it was known that out of the 25 boys sent up by us 12 had gone successfully through the ordeal. Little 'Kannu' was expected to head the list, but through some carelessness in his algebra paper, he came out only third in the Presidency whilst securing a first class."

When he joined the F. A. Class in the beginning of 1879, a considerable change was noticed in him, which became more and more marked as days went by. His usual cheerfulness and merriment did not altogether desert him; but an air of seriousness and gravity now characterized all his movements and actions. He became, so to say, wedded to his studies, and wasted no time on vain and fruitless amusements. The outcome of this intensified application was a first class both in the F. A. and the B. A. examinations, in which he ranked first and second respectively in the Presidency. The latter especially was a remarkable feat for young Swamikannu who, under very unfavourable circumstances, had chosen Mathematics for his optional subject. He made this selection, though

the College had no proper arrangements to teach the group, in order to show that he possessed as much aptitude for it as his friend and rival, the late Mr. T. V. Arogyaswami Pillai, Public Prosecutor, Ramnad, who invariably carried off the prize in Mathematics, coming second to Swamikannu in every other subject.

An event of some importance, and not unconnected with our story, marked the beginning of 1882. Private colleges had in those days to maintain a stiff fight in support of their grants with the Government Educational Department presided over by Colonel MacDonald. This gallant officer was popular in the Department itself, but aided schools had reasons enough to complain about him. He had boldly enunciated the doctrine, upon which he was acting even more boldly, that the prime duty of his Department was to nurse Government institutions. This was contrary to the educational policy of the State, as laid down in Lord Halifax's despatch of 1854, which purposed to devolve the work of educating the people upon private agencies, and regarded Government institutions as temporary models which these private agencies should be 'aided' and encouraged to reach in point of efficiency and equipment. The fight, which was more or less general throughout the country, was coming to a head in Madras. In the end Lord Ripon appointed a Commission to go into the question of the working of the educational system in India, and to make recommendations as to what should be done to place education in all its phases on a footing of progressive development. Its President was Sir William Hunter, the author of the Imperial Gazetteer of India and a Member of the Viceroy's Council. He was charged by the Viceroy to visit the principal seats of education in

India. During the eight months that elapsed between the two sessions of the Commission, he paid a visit to St. Joseph's College on October 20, 1882. Sir W. Hunter was accompanied by the Rev. Dr. William Miller, of the Christian College, Madras.[1]

Swamikannu Pillai, a mere lad of seventeen who had just passed his B. A., was singled out by the authorities of the College to prepare an address of welcome. He did so, and greatly distinguished himself by reading a Latin poem, the elegance and melody of which were much appreciated by the visitors. This is how he himself describes the event concealing, with his wonted modesty the prominent part of the reception festivities which had been allotted to him. "Towards the end of the year 1882 (20th October) two of the members of the Commission, Sir W. W. Hunter, the President, and Dr. W. Miller, visited St. Joseph's College, Negapatam, in company with their colleague, Fr. Jean. Great preparations were made for their reception; addresses in Latin were presented to both the distinguished visitors, Fr. Jean's contribution being an acrostic poem in Ovidian elegiacs in honour of Dr. Miller. In response, Sir W. W. Hunter, who had of course been informed of all the arrangements now nearing maturity for the transfer of the College to Trichinopoly, delivered himself of the following lines in which the expected event was felicitously coupled with the name of Fr. Jean :

J is for the **J**esuits, learned and kind.
E for their **E**fforts to train up the mind,
A for their **A**ntipathy against shallow cram,
N for the **N**ew College from Negapatam.

1 William Miller—O. Kandaswamy Chetti, Chap. IX.

After taking his degree, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai offered his services on a mere nominal salary to the College in which he had received gratuitous education, and was at once appointed Professor of English in the Junior F. A. and the Junior B. A. Classes. He began his professorial career at Trichinopoly to which Catholic centre the College had been removed by the Rev Fr. Barbier, then Superior General of the Madura Mission, in January 1883.[1]

We have already adverted to the fact that at Negapatam for lack of sufficient material to work upon there was no scope for expansion. For, owing to its situation at one end of the Tanjore district and on the east coast, and owing to the absence of direct railway communications between Negapatam and the south of the Presidency, the great majority of the pupils were those from Karikal, Pondicherry, Tanjore and Trichinopoly, and their number never exceeded the maximum of about 350. It was undoubtedly possible to raise this figure by the transfer of the College to a more central place like Trichinopoly, the headquarters of the Madura Mission and a great railway junction. The action of the South Indian Railway authorities in removing thither all their offices, save those connected with their workshops, clearly pointed to Trichinopoly as the heart of a railway system where the different lines met and where existed possibilities of vast future development. In following the example set by the foresight of the Railway authorities, Fr. Barbier solved at one stroke the three problems that confronted him: the paucity of material and the consequent waste of educational effort of which Dr. Bradshaw had written in his inspection reports; the increasing demand on the part of the Catholics of his own Mission for adequate

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1 Le Pere Léon Barbier by Jean—Baptiste Dessal, S. J., p. 127.

educational facilities for their children, and the direction taken by the negotiations between the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII and his faithful Majesty King D. Luis I of Portugal. These negotiations resulted three years later, 1886, in a Concordat according to which, as Fr. Barbier had foreseen, the Tanjore portion of the Madura Mission had to be surrendered to the Padroado. The availability for immediate occupation of Clive's House enabled the Jesuits to take a decision even before the conclusion of the Concordat. From what came to be known later, the transfer of the College to Trichinopoly had another effect, that of saving the District to the Madura Mission.

As a brilliant and successful Professor of English, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai contributed not a little to the popularity of St. Joseph's in its new home. While thus employed he found time to turn his attention to the task of passing his M. A. examination in English and in Latin. With his superior knowledge of these two subjects, it was not hard for him to take his degree at the end of the allotted period of two years. He also set himself closely to the study of the Sanskrit language taking daily lessons from the Senior Sanskrit Pandit of the College. Physical Science was another subject to which he devoted much of his leisure, and he made it a point to attend the practical classes in the laboratory.

It was during this period of educational activity as a Lecturer in St. Joseph's College 1883—1887 that the question presented itself to him whether the priesthood might not be his true calling. In his Spiritual Diary he frequently returns to the subject of his career. On the one hand it seemed as if by nature, by temperament and education, he had been set apart for God's service. On

the other, he saw in the needs of his family a serious obstacle to the realization of the higher ambitions of his soul. In this undecided frame of mind he took counsel of the Rev. Fr. Sewell, late Major J. D. W. Sewell, recently converted to the Catholic Church from Anglican Ritualism. At his suggestion he resolved to go through a course of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola under the direction of Fr. Eyraud, and in the end definitely made up his mind to remain a layman. He was married on the 10th June 1887 to Ratnasiromani Ammal in the Church of Karumathampatti, Coimbatore District.

CHAPTER II

THE POLYGLOT

From childhood Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was a lover of learning, and gave unmistakable signs of future eminence. Most young men, after taking a degree, cast aside their books and, at best, plunge headlong into the whirl of professional duties: but he remained an enthusiastic student to the end of his days. It is true that for upwards of thirty years he was a Government servant who rose from one comfortable berth to another, because of the tremendous volume of work he could turn out almost in any department of the service. Yet his real calling lay in the pursuits of the scholar. It has been remarked that Mr. Swamikannu Pillai is one of those who mistook their vocation, and that the sum total of his achievement would have been much richer in abiding value had he devoted his rare talents wholly to research and scholarship. One cannot sufficiently regret that no Maecenas came forward to encourage him with an endowment for higher studies in England, when he very narrowly missed topping the list in the B. A. examination of 1882. It is vain and profitless to indulge in a forecast of mere possibilities, but, the present writer at least, cannot help thinking that in few other

instances would University money have been spent more wisely, or produced a larger return. As it is, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai must, from a literary point of view, for ever remain one of the inheritors of unfulfilled renown, a genius to whom the great opportunity was never offered.

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We are told in Russel's biography of Mezzofanti that this famous Cardinal spoke perfectly thirty-eight languages among which were Hindustani and Gujerati, that he knew thirty others less perfectly and fifty different dialects of all these languages.[1] We cannot claim anything like it in the case of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai. All the same, he was endowed with such prodigious memory and linguistic talents that he might have proved a polyglot hardly second to the marvellous Cardinal had he given his attention exclusively to this study. He is reputed to have known thirteen or fourteen languages both Eastern and Western, and was most perfect in English, the language of his adoption and the medium of expression of all his writings.

Indeed nature had favoured him in this language with the gift for style, an instinct for the simple, neat, inevitable word. Even a short conversation with him was enough to make you feel you were in the presence of an English scholar, not merely because of the rich fund of anecdote and quotation with which he was wont to adorn whatever he said, but because of an aristocratic elegance of phrase which never failed him. English in his keeping was a polished instrument of expression. There was the ring of

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1 Catholic Encyclopædia—Mezzofanti.

classic style in his crystal-like sentences. You could not easily resist the impression that he had delved deep into the authors who created the literature of "our indispensable eighteenth century" and had succeeded, to use Johnson's old saying, in obtaining 'an English style familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, by giving his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.'

He does not seem, however, to have been closely in touch with modern English books. "I do not think," says Mr. Ruthnaswami, who was for many years his intimate friend, "he ever read any of the works of Wells or Bernard Shaw, or Belloc or Chesterton; he was a realist with regard to literature—and cared for ideas rather than words. I fancy what he cared for in the old classics was the things they record—character, personality, the reaction of virtue and vice in human beings. I cannot imagine him rolling on his tongue the periods of Gibbon or of Macaulay just for the pleasure of it. I remember his finding a book on my table, "L'Art et l'Histoire" by a French writer. He read a chapter or so, and laid the book down rather tired saying, 'Words, words, it is curious how these modern writers use so many words about so few thoughts.'" The truth is Swamikannu Pillai was a linguist and a man of science more than a student of literature. He loved the latter not as an end, not for literature's sake, but loved it as a means and a vehicle of expression. If we cannot praise him enough for the beauty and purity of his style, it must also be confessed that he lacked the imaginative faculty, the sustained inspiration so essential to the highest manifestations of genius in literature or art.

That the reader may form an idea of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's way of writing, we will quote two passages almost

at haphazard from his works. We take the first from the essay on "The Chronology of the Early Tamil Literature." It relates the story of Silappedhikaram. For brevity's sake, only the first part of the story will be given.

> "Kovalan, the son of a rich merchant of Karivipattinam, the maritime capital of the Cholas, had wasted all his substance like a prodigal son on an actress called Madhavi, deserting his faithful and loving wife Kannaki. On one occasion, according to their yearly custom, Kovalan and Madhavi went to the beach to watch, from their gilded canopy, the sea-bathing festival which brought to a close the 28 days' celebration in honour of Indra. The festival began, we are told, on a Saturday near the full moon at the end of Chittirai, and was kept up for four weeks: on the Sunday following the last Saturday of the feast, the flag was taken down, and on Monday the people went to bathe in the sea. On the present occasion Kovalan sang to the accompaniment of his lute a song as though he were pining for an absent love. Presently Madhavi took the lute from him and sang in turn a similar song. Kovalan was stung to the quick by the actress's behaviour, and left her abruptly. In vain she implored him to return. Kovalan, instead of returning to the actress, returned in the evening of the Monday to his own wife Kannaki, who sat moaning and pining for him, and surprised her with an invitation to proceed with him to Madura, where he hoped to sell one of her anklets, his last bit of property but a valuable item, and rehabilitate his fortunes by trading on his capital. She readily

complied, and they left their home secretly before the dawn of Tuesday and while it was yet quite dark."

The second passage is an extract from a Memoir which Swamikannu Pillai wrote on the occasion of the death of his beloved and revered friend, Father Jean, on September 16th, 1921, at the Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur, Kodaikanal. It is not the intention of the present writer to fully endorse and make his own the fears referred to in the quotation.

"To this legion the Rev. Fr. Jean attached himself when he cast his learning and his talents at the feet of his Master saying: 'Take me and do with me what you will for the good of India.' For one like him who in spite of severe austerities attains longevity in this land of exile there are thousands who go to a premature grave, the victims of privation and of tropical diseases: and the life of those who live longer than the rest is not less a life-long sacrifice cheerfully offered for the good of this country. Still against such men as a body it is painful to record that the voice of not a few misguided Catholics has been raised in these latter days, a voice that discerns not the fundamental difference between Swaraj in politics and Swaraj in the Catholic Church. To the European who exploits the country the patriotic Indian may honestly oppose the cry of *Swaraj*, but the Catholic missionary living a life of stringent poverty and more stringent celibacy takes not a farthing from India, not even like St. Paul who required his converts to contribute for the

necessities of their poorer brethren abroad, but spends in India and for India's children what little money he is able to collect in other lands and gives to this country his lifeblood to its last drop; that such men should be decried by any one, least of all by Catholics, is one of the most shameful doings of our times. The Catholic missionary comes here not only to stay but in 999 cases out of a thousand to die in this land of adoption. Should Indians be so foolish at any time as to proscribe all Catholic foreign missionaries, they will still flock hither braving persecution as did Blessed John de Britto when he re-entered Ramnad after being proscribed from there and was beheaded for daring to return thither. The Catholic missionary comes here under a higher law than that of man, and will, we hope, continue to come always. We can never keep the Holy Ghost out of India."

The above may be considered fair specimens of Swamikannu Pillai's habitual style both in writing and in conversation. The reader will not fail to notice that, quite contrary to modern usage, he employs the long periodic sentence more frequently than the loose, which Coleridge, if we mistake not, branded as the speech of people suffering from asthma. In all his writings one cannot but admire the appropriateness of diction and phrase and the lucidity of context so characteristic of literary work. A kind of noble reserve pervades his prose joined to an undercurrent of spirituality, a distinctive mood of the Indian temperament and its traditions. The style is studiously unsentimental, it never unconsciously aims at arousing the emotions and, when it does, the pitch of emotion it reaches

and to which it summons is never very high. Throughout the wide range of Swamikannu Pillai's essays, religious, literary and scientific, the predominant note is one of passionless intellectualism. It is a thousand pities that this atmosphere of contemplative calm, of 'sunset and evening star,' is fast disappearing nowadays under the influence of political ideals which find it necessary to seek notoriety through a more noisy and democratic medium of expression.

His purely literary work consists mainly of essays written for various Magazines as occasion presented itself and amid the practical occupations of life. Other kinds of literary composition also demanded his attention. One can see from his correspondence that his friends never hesitated to have recourse to him for addresses, for Latin or English verses and such like writings customary at the time of public festivities. In one of his letters he alludes to these injudicious demands and gently complains saying: "People seem to think I have time and talent for doing every thing that can be done under the sun." In September 1923, the Right Rev. Francis T. Roche, S. J., D. D., was consecrated Bishop of Tuticorin. A friend of the new Bishop as well as of Swamikannu Pillai wrote to the latter for a few complimentary lines alleging that they were needed within three or four days. Swamikannu Pillai received the letter just two days before the reply was due, and wrote: "I returned from Rajahmundry and Guntur today and found on my arrival your letter dated 13—9—1923. I have no time to send you a finished product: but perhaps the following will do.

An Acrostic in Honour of Dr. F. T. Roche, S. J.

From **T**uty **R**ose **O**ur **C**hurch's **H**igh **E**state
Tuty, but lately tossed 'twixt love and **H**ate,[1]
Rejoices, having now attained the **C**rown
Of her desire,—a Bishop of her **O**wn:
Clergy and laity at one **R**ejoice!
Hurrah, they sing, Be blessed twice and **T**hrice.
Eia! **H**aveas **C**orde **O**reque **R**egem, **T**urba **F**idelis!

Swamikannu Pillai himself was pleased with his performance, and wrote on the 22nd: "I am glad the acrostic I composed in a hurry to catch you before the 19th proved to be not so bad after all. Very often what one toils at for nights and days is not so good as an effusion of the moment." He seems to have been fond of such plays upon words. He once wrote to his daughter Joanna Berchmans,[2] then a student of St. Ann's Convent High School, Mangalore: "Anagrams, acrostics and magic squares are very interesting amusements with words, and I am glad you are having them. Anagrams are difficult to make. The best in the language is probably that on 'Horatio Nelson', the great English naval hero of Trafalgar. The anagram is 'Honor est a Nilo', which means in Latin 'His honour is from the Nile' because he won the famous

1 This line contains an allusion to some differences among the people of Tuticorin at the time of the election of the new Bishop. Each of the contending parties claimed to have the appointment made from among the members of its own caste.

2 Joanna Berchmans, A. L. C. M. (Associate of the London College of Music), the third daughter of Swamikannu Pillai by his second wife, was born on 13th August 1900, educated at St. Ann's Convent High School, Mangalore, and at Queen Mary's College, Madras. She is married to Dr. J. C. Thivy, M. B., B. S. (Hongkong).

battle of the Nile. But acrostics are easy and they may be made instructive."

Instances of this kind tending to reveal the versatility of Swamikannu Pillai could be indefinitely multiplied. The following is interesting and quite characteristic of the man. An old fellow student of his had asked for a Latin line from Juvenal of which some indication was given in the letter, and also for the once famous sentence of Johnson about snuff. Swamikannu replied from Nellore, 31–8–1918; "I send you both the sentence and the verse to the best of my ability. With Juvenal I am on surer ground than with his imitator Johnson. The verse is in the 10th satire, ver. 22. The sentence, I believe, runs thus: "Will you please allow me to insert my digital extremities into your odoriferous concavity, thence to extract the pulverised atoms which entering my nasal cavity shall titillate my olfactory nerves."

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English was but one of the many languages he could speak and write with facility. He had as much familiarity with Tamil which, though the last language he thoroughly mastered from a literary standpoint, had nevertheless come to him by heredity from his scholarly mother. For many years he was a member of the Tamil Lexicon Committee. The services he rendered to it were duly recognized on the occasion of his death when, at a special meeting, held on Friday, September 18th, 1925, with Mr. T. V. Sheshagiri Iyer in the chair, a resolution was passed expressing the sense of irreparable loss the Committee had sustained by the death of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai. In

Sanskrit he was nothing less than a *pundit*. For him it was the classic language of India, the substitute in Indian Schools for the two classic languages of the West—Greek and Latin. He knew Hindi, Gujerathi, Malayalam, Telugu, Kanarese and other vernaculars, the knowledge of which he had opportunities to improve during his long career of active work in the many districts of the Presidency.

From 1903 to 1917 Mr. Swamikannu Piliai was Chairman of the Board of Examiners of the Madras University in Greek, Latin, French and German. In the long series of eminent men who filled that chair, he was the only one, so people used to say, who possessed a sound knowledge of all the languages from which the Board is named. With the first two, Greek and Latin, we shall deal presently. He spoke German and French fluently. French, in a special manner, he knew almost to perfection. Mr. J. Hedde, an Officer in the French army during the War, and owner of the Variday Mullay Estate, Coimbatore, once said to the writer: "I met L. D. Swamikannu Pillai in Paris in the summer of 1922. He was returning from England where he had been sent by the Government of Madras to study the working of the House of Commons. Mere chance had brought me in contact with him in Paris, but, from the first, I was struck with his perfect mastery of the French language. He spoke it nearly like one of us." Mention must be made of a little book, "Le Catholique D'Action" which in 1910 he discovered, while making his retreat in Trichinopoly, and translated from French into English.

Issued in Spain under the title "El Catolico De Action," the book was a success from the start. The first

edition came out in September 1905: at the beginning of 1907 the fourth impression was almost exhausted, although the third had consisted of 20,000 copies. The French edition, which first appeared in October 1907, had exceeded 30,000 copies by May 1908. To understand the extent of its success it will suffice to say that "Le Catholique D'Action" has been hailed as the "Imitation of the Twentieth Century." This little book under the title of "Catholic Action,"[1] in its elegant English version from the pen of Swamikannu Pillai, deserves in India all the popularity it enjoyed from the first on the Continent.

A few words remain to be said about Swamikannu Pillai's knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He had read the Greek and Latin classics as probably no Indian has read them. Holy Scripture, we are told, was familiar to him in all these three, but more especially in the last two languages. Yet he would be found at times poring over the pages of King David and the Prophets in their original inspired form. With Greek he was more at home than with Hebrew, and we possess a manuscript, bound in red morocco, wholly written in Swamikannu Pillai's own hand and containing a selection of prayers in Greek. They are just those prayers which a devout Christian is wont to recite daily at his devotions. Quotations from Greek authors are met with frequently in his note-books especially with reference to his studies in Astronomy and Astrology. As to Latin he was undoubtedly one of the best scholars in this country. He took to it as a fish takes to water, was perfectly at ease with its classics which he read, in Macaulay's phrase, with his feet on the fender. His letters

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1 Catholic Action by G. Palau, S. J.—St. Joseph's Industrial School Press, Trichinopoly.

to the Rev. Fr. Jean were often in Latin, both prose and verse being used according to the subject-matter of the correspondence. Let us rescue at least one of them from the oblivion to which all the others must needs be doomed.

On October 15th, 1913, he writes to Fr. Jean who was celebrating his 81st birthday:

"Dominicus Reverendissimo Patri Augusto Jean, S. J.: hoc Sanctae Teresiae die fausto novies nonum aetatis annum ineunti salutem dicit plurimam: oratque Deum ferventer ut ipsi donec centesimum vitae compleverit annum plenam concedat vitae copiam: iisdem votis domus amantissima, filiolæ cum filiolis et matre precantur.

Lustra, Pater, complens hodie bis octo vocaris
Ter felix: felici gratulor et licet absens
Me cupio Socium gaudenti jungere turbae.[1]

Two years before his death Swamikannu Pillai translated into English verse the Latin prayer of St. Bernard to Jesus Crucified. The full title of the Prayer is: "Rhythmica oratio ad unum quodlibet membrorum Christi patientis et a cruce pendentis," *i. e.*, a Rhythmical Prayer to each one of the Limbs of Christ suffering and hanging on the Cross." It consists of 75 stanzas of five lines each and is likewise translated into English stanzas of five lines, In a letter to a friend, dated 2--7—1923, Mr. Swamikannu

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1 Dominic [Swamikannu] sends many greetings to the Rev. Fr. Augustus Jean, S. J., who on this day sacred to St. Teresa, commences his eighty first year, and prays God to grant him fulness of life to complete his hundredth year, in which prayer the whole family, daughters, sons and wife unite themselves.

Thrice happy! four score years you now complete,
Your joys I share; and, though from far, entreat
To join the festive throngs that round you meet.

Pillai shows both his deep knowledge of Latin and the pains he took over this translation. We give only a portion of the letter:

"Other corrections are intended to bring the English closer to St. Bernard's words or at least to his meaning. There were three or four expressions which I found it difficult to understand because they are expressions peculiar to St. Bernard's epoch, and they are not to be found in classical Latin. These are:

"P. 4.—"Sed suffer et dissimula" which I translate "But suffer me and hide my soul," though 'dissimula' has usually a less concrete connotation.

P. 7.—"Membra maculenta.......in ramo crucis torrida" would be difficult to understand but for a parallel passage in Cicero, Oratio de lege Agraria 2.34.93, which seems to throw light on the meaning. The difficulty is that 'maculenta' is not derived in this case from 'macula' but from 'macies.'

P. 14.—"Cum amoris intersigno." This was the most difficult word of all. It is an old French word 'entresigne' which is explained in the Oxford English Dictionary, but not in the largest French Dictionaries."

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With a few remarks on the correspondence of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai we will bring this chapter to a close. He was most painstaking about his letters and diligent in replying to those coming from his many friends and acquaintances. To one of them he wrote on January 10th, 1924: "You will be very glad to find that since my

Presidentship I have become a more orderly man. I believe I have answered every letter of congratulation that was sent to me. It is true I have answered in print some thousands of letters which I have received, since 18th Dec.: but I have managed to answer them all punctually." We were fortunate enough to be able to collect about three hundred letters of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai, and have found in them the same characteristics of style and diction to be met with in his more ambitious writings. In accordance with the limits we set to ourselves from the beginning in this biography we will publish some of them, as occasion presents itself, and this procedure makes it unnecessary to further illustrate our statements in this chapter. The reader, however, may rest assured that it is with genuine pleasure that we have perused Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's carefully worded correspondence, in the penning of which he must have been as much at pains as in the preparation of his printed essays. This is all the more to be admired when one reflects that the hero of these pages was the last man to write to his friends, as many well-known authors have done, with an eye to posterity.

CHAPTER III

A PIONEER IN SCIENCE

English and the classics seemed at first the subjects in which Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was destined to make a mark. It was not to be so. The best part of his life-work falls entirely within the domain of science and, more particularly, of the science which he made his own, the application of Astronomy to investigations in Indian Chronology. His volumes on this subject would be sufficient to earn for him the title of savant, perhaps the greatest Indian savant in that branch of learning. One who opens the Indian Ephemeris is amazed at the vast and extraordinary knowledge of its author, and still more at the colossal amount of work these books represent. He was, moreover, equally interested in mathematics, politics, history and the study of religion. His mind was in fact as wide as it was vigorous. The number of his publications bears testimony both to the depth of his scholarship, and the wide range and originality of his intellect.

In 1908 Mr. Swamikannu Pillai published "Phonal

Aids to Phonography" in five volumes. The first of these volumes, "A Course of Phonal Shorthand" contains copious selections in short-hand from the phonal series and 17 charts, fully illustrating and applying the principles of Pitman's Shorthand. It was very favourably reviewed and received by students of this subject, some of whom avowed that it saved them from despair at the moment they were about to give up Pitman's system. It was a real invention on which Sir Isaac Pitman himself in a letter, 22nd December 1908, congratulated the author calling his system "an ingenious and original phonetic analysis of the English language." The author claims that by the aid of his method shorthand can be written after one week's study thus saving the would-be pupil much time and trouble. The five volumes are, in fact, a library of phonographic literature.

"The Secret of Memory,"[1] written in collaboration with Mr. D. Arulanandam Pillai, B. A., B. L., came out in the following year. It embodied the principles of the Loisettian system of memory training with which he had become acquainted during his years of teaching at St. Joseph's College. Even from the time of his student days he had begun to adopt various methods for memorizing his class lessons. He would appoint a certain portion of his text-books for each day, and repeat the poems over and over again during the recreation hours; and in this manner

i) A Course of Phonal Shorthand
ii) Phonal Dictionary
iii) Phonal Digest
iv) Phonal Decipherer and Dictionary
v) Phonal Dictator.

1 The Secret of Memory or The Art of Never Forgetting in six parts, Grant & Co., Royapuram, Madras.

he was able to learn by heart from cover to cover all the text-books for a particular year—Milton and Shakespeare, Ovid, Virgil, Horace and even Lucretius.

It was however during the period of his professorial life at St. Joseph's that he turned his serious attention to the system of Mnemonics as a valuable aid to the cultivation and improvement of memory. We are told that Mr. Swamikannu Pillai came to know from one of the Fathers of the College of this new system of memory training. The secrets of it had been set forth and explained in five lectures and printed by its author in as many booklets. But each booklet cost a guinea, and even after the five guineas had been paid, copies of those booklets could not be had without an undertaking signed by the person concerned to keep the system a strict secret. Nothing daunted the young Professor paid down his guineas, signed the bond, and getting the five booklets devoured them with avidity, and soon found the system a very valuable aid in memorizing things. He naturally spoke to his students of the great help of this method in the cultivation of memory, and exhorted them to go in for it. They remained incorrigibly sceptical. To combat their scepticism Mr. Swamikannu Pillai proposed to submit himself to the severest ordeal they could think of. The students consented and prepared a long list of nonsense words, the most atrocious and barbarous in sound, like "rococo, abracadabra," etc., and handed the list to their young Professor, allowing him only ten minutes to memorize and repeat them without a hitch or mistake. The test was accepted and Swamikannu Pillai quietly took the paper, glanced at the list of fifty words, and retired to his room. When the allotted ten minutes were over the students

gathered in front of his room in gleeful anticipation of his discomfiture. He came out, and after imposing silence on the tumultuous crowd, proceeded to recite in a calm, unruffled voice without hesitation and without a single mistake, all the fifty words in the order given in the list, first from beginning to end, then backwards again from end to beginning. The students were astounded. Their scepticism was turned into admiration, and this increased tenfold when the Professor began to recite from the list every third word both forwards and backwards, in any order that the students should choose. This method of Mnemonics Mr. Swamikannu Pillai turned into a system peculiarly his own which, as stated above, he published in 1909 under the title of "Secret of Memory."

So far, it would seem, Swamikannu Pillai had not discovered his real mind. Phonal Shorthand and the Secret of Memory were but tentative studies, meant, consciously or unconsciously, as some sort of intelligence test preparatory to work of a higher order. Though issued in 1908 and 1909 they really belong to an earlier date looking back to the time of his collegiate life and the first years of his official career.

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It is no easy task to trace with any accuracy the genesis both historical and psychological of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's first interest in astronomical studies. It apparently dates from the time he was Assistant Secretary, Board of Revenue, between the years 1895—1906. One of his friends at this period, the late Mr. Ambrose, B. A., B. L.,

was fond of astronomical calculations. His favourite hobby was to dabble in almanac-making, and it may well be that his conversations on the subject, especially his claim to possess the secret of a perpetual calendar, had something to do with the fondness evinced by Swamikannu Pillai in this branch of study. Be that as it may; in the introductory remarks to his works, as well as in the many notes of his diaries, he is reticent upon this topic, and gives no clue which might lead to a reconstruction of his mental development. We find no record of specialization in astronomy during his collegiate course or during the yet unsettled term of his official career at Kurnool.

His contributions to the press seem to start from the year 1900, when the Indian Review for May published his article on "Thithis, Nakshatras and other Indian dates." From this and from the fact that the first edition of Indian Chronology came out in 1911, we shall not be far wide of the mark in assuming that the years between 1900—1910 form what may be called his time of 'apprenticeship.' Professor Jacobi's Epigraphia Indica, published in 1888, supplied the stimulus that called forth the series of reactions ending with the publication of the Ephemeris. In the preface to the Indian Chronology Swamikannu Pillai expresses his obligations to previous writers and adds: "To one honoured name in the field of Indian Astronomy and Chronology, that of Professor Hermann Jacobi, he wishes, though an utter stranger, to express special indebtedness, since to him the author owes his first knowledge of the subject as well as numerous illustrations serving to test the correctness of his method."

"Indian Chronology, Solar, Lunar and Planetary"[1] appeared first in 1911, and was reprinted at Government expense in 1922. It gives complete information on all topics of Indian Chronology and furnishes accurate methods for calculating all items connected with it. For the latter purpose serve numerous tables, which take up 233 closely printed quarto pages containing little short of a million figures. They are preceded by 144 pages of letter press divided into four parts. The first part gives a full and clear explanation of the calendary system of the Hindus, the quantities used in it, and methods for calculating those items which are noticed in an Indian Almanac, viz., solar and lunar days, nakshatras, the Tyajyam, Yogas, Jovian, cyclic years, eclipses etc. The second and third parts explain the use of the several tables and their construction. The fourth part (Planets and Planetary Chronology) teaches how to calculate the mean and the true places of planets and how to construct Indian horoscopes.

Speaking of the merits of Indian Chronology, Professor Jacobi writes: "As regards the methods of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai in general, they may safely be pronounced to be sound and correct. The author has taken care to prove their correctness by calculating the same dates which have been calculated by his predecessors and showing that his method yields exactly the same results arrived at by them. His ingenuity in divising these methods, and his indefatigable perseverance in working them out in numerous tables, will ever command the sincere respect of all who are able to appreciate work of this kind. The author has

1 Indian Chronology, Solar, Lunar and Planetary, B. C. 3102 to B. C. 1 and A. D. 1 to A. D. 2000—Grant & Co., Royapuram, Madras.

rendered a great service to his science, and will have a lasting claim on our gratitude."

From this time onwards, despite the daily round of official duties gone though with that clockwork punctuality so characteristic of him, he pushed on his enquiries into the studies of his choice and predilection. The midnight oil burnt freely in his little room, and as years rolled on, each in its turn brought out a fresh article or lecture by way of illustrating the practical use of Indian Chronology in historical investigations. It is beyond our purpose to offer more than a passing notice of all these essays. He contributed a number of articles to the "Indian Antiquary" on the Pandyas of the 13th and 14th centuries (1913), and on the exact date of Buddha's death (1914); to the Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XI, on the dates of Kulothunga Chola II; to the Journal of the South Indian Association on the Indian Theory of Precession of Equinoxes (1911), on the dates of Alvars (1914); to the Annual Report on Madras Epigraphy 1914-15, 1915-16, 1916-17 on the verification of dated inscriptions. He often wrote for the St. Joseph's College Magazine, Trichinopoly, from which we select as deserving special mention his contributions on the System of Chronology in early Tamil Literature, 1914, and on Some Peculiarities in Tamil Inscriptions, 1917. In 1922 the Madras Government published Swamikannu Pillai's "Indian Ephemeris" in seven volumes. It is his *magnum opus* of which we propose to give a more detailed account in the next chapter of this book.

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It is almost impossible, especially in India, to apply

oneself to astronomical investigations without having one's attention drawn to the kindred science of Astrology. We do not wonder then that Swamikannu Pillai surrendered to the spell which this queen of occult sciences, this veritable Cleopatra among them—for "age does not wither it, nor custom stale its infinite variety"—exerts on Indian minds. He simply could not escape from pushing his researches into those aspects of Chronology which are in the main connected with the scientific study of Indian Astrology.

Swamikannu Pillai was not an admirer of astrology as a means of prediction, but he applied himself to it with as much patience as if he had complete faith in its tenets. Indeed, it is not easy to discern from the compass of his scientific works without travelling to the controversial pamphlets, which he has written on the subject, that he is decidedly an hostile critic of the science. For yet another reason he found it necessary, nay, a matter of conscience for him, to turn his attention to the popular aspect of Indian astrology. He held it to be a duty of a Catholic student of Indian astronomy to seek how far the so called claims of its kindred subject can be reconciled with the claims of his religious creed. As a Catholic he accepted the doctrine of the Church, as a scientist he wished to convince himself that the Church was right, and to be in a position to demonstrate it with all the evidence of critical and scientific apparatus. He found that in this Thomas Aquinas had long ago set him an example. Indeed, it is significant that only now, after long years of apologies, are we beginning to understand that Aquinas's interest in astrology was the postulate not of a naïve

credulity, but rather a passionate eagerness to search everywhere for information.[1]

A brochure on the "Credibility of Astrology" was published in 1922, and was soon followed by a reprint of "Notes on Hindu Astrology" first published in 1887 by Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao. To the "Notes" Swamikannu Pillai adds numerous explanations in which he points out that Indian Astrology is not anything so ancient as Indian Astronomy; that planetary astrology, applied to the fortunes of individuals, was first cultivated by Chaldean and Greek Astrologers in the 3rd or the 4th century B. C. and that not till the 3rd or the 4th century A. D. did the so-called science of Astrology, based on planetary influence, find its way into India. He fully agrees with Sir T. Madhava Rao that there can be no possible connection between certain specified combinations of planets at birth and certain infirmities such as leprosy, idiocy, blindness, insanity, which might supervene at any time of a person's life. He argues that such combinations "occur either much more frequently or much more rarely than the diseases of which they are supposed to be invariable concomitants; secondly, that such combinations, however complex, occur with absolute regularity, and as, in a given country like India, they must occur in the same lagna, hora or drakana all over the land, we must, if astrology were true, have persons afflicted with the same infirmities being born all over India at the same time, and every census would disclose the existence of a large number of persons of the same age and afflicted with the same infirmities, and few or none at other ages suffering

1 Paul Choisnard; Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l' influence des astres, Paris 1926.

from the same calamities. All this is directly contrary to actual experience."[1]

It were beyond the scope of a biographical sketch to pursue the line of argument of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's learned essay on the "Credibility of Astrology" enhanced as it is by the narrative of many stories culled from that class of predictions which more commonly come within the range of the astrologer's daily performances, such as the birth of children, the death of relations, success in examinations and the winning of a law-suit. Swamikannu Pillai did not lack personal experience of the astrologer's cunning dexterity and was convinced that predictions of this kind can be made by anybody gifted with more or less shrewdness, and without any aid from astrology and that, moreover, both those who make such predictions and those who are affected by them are well aware that they will probably be fulfilled only in a certain percentage of cases, and that out of a large number of predictions some must necessarily remain unfulfilled. The whole subject is discussed with so much fulness of detail and cogency of argument that it is impossible to refuse assent to Swamikannu Pillai's conclusions. He does conclude quite boldly that Astrology is not a science, because there is no necessary or possible connection between its predictions and the planets whose influences are supposed to be recorded in works on Astrology. "Whatever attitude," he says, "European nations may have adopted in the past towards medieval astrologers, they know that astrology and science are as far apart as the two poles. Astrology may be a practical art, but it is an "art" which depends for its

1 Notes of Hindu Astrology, p. 11.

"practice," in the majority of cases, on the ability to profit by the weakness, the passions, the folly and the greed of its deluded victims."

Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's investigations into the mysteries of astrology both from a practical and an astronomical point of view lasted to the very end of his life. It was easy enough for him to convince us in these studies that, in nearly all cases of ordinary predictions, the conclusions arrived at by popular astrologers could have been reached independently of astrological calculations. But instances are not wanting in India, the land of prophets and seers, of the occurrence of events predicted before-hand to the minutest details, which would seem unexplainable by the astutest feat of natural shrewdness of intellect. Such cases were meat and drink to Swamikannu Pillai. He would make them the subject of special research and leave no stone unturned in his anxiety to trace the sources of information by which the prediction had been made possible. The following letter contains perhaps the best illustration of the above statements. Though long, we print it in full on account of its unique significance and special interest withholding, for obvious reasons, the name of the personage to whom it is addressed. It was written just a month and a few days before Swamikannu Pillai's death, and we doubt if he ever received an answer to it.

FORT ST. GEORGE,
3 AUGUST 1925.

Dear Sir,

It is probably easier for me to introduce myself as the President of the Madras Legislative Council than as an author of several published works on Indian

astronomy, in which capacity I now presume to address you.

My studies in Indian astronomy have gradually led me to take up Indian astrology, the futility of which I have been endeavouring to demonstrate. At p. 10 of the enclosed pamphlet on the *Credibility of Indian Astrology*, I have stated that no astrologer has yet succeeded in predicting by means of his art the exact day and hour of a future event, *not calculable by physical laws*. I still believe that this statement holds good, notwithstanding the following singular occurrence which I am sure will interest you:

On the 8 Nov., 1923 (Tuesday) the *Swadesamitran,* a Tamil daily newspaper having a large circulation published as a correspondent's article under the heading "an astrological prediction," the following: "*The 5th Feb. 1924 will be an auspicious day for all India as on that day at 7 a. m. Mahatma Gandhi will be released. The Mahatma's ideals will be fulfilled by March 1931. If he is not released on 5 Feby. 1924 he will certainly be released by 1 Jany. 1925.*"

The correspondent, Satakopachari, an astrologer of Tiruttani (near Tirupati) has ever since called himself the "Gandhi astrologer" and has published a leaflet in which the prediction about 5 Feb. 1924 is repeated with the certificate of the Manager of the Swadesamitran, but the alternative prediction for 1st Jan. 1925 and the prediction about the fulfilment of ideals before March 1931 are omitted in the leaflet, which is of course meant for consumption by the public. The leaflet gives Mr. Gandhi's horoscope and

supplies some astrological hints as to the planetary influences which led to his imprisonment and release: but nothing in all this leads cogently to the date and hour 7 a. m. 5 Feb. 1924 which no doubt was the time of Mr. Gandhi's release. The question is, how on 8 Nov. 1923, did the date 5 Feb. 1924 suggest itself to the astrologer's mind as the day of Mr. Gandhi's release? I have seen the issue of the Tamil paper, d. 8 Nov. 1923, and verified the contents of the article in question.

There are a few circumstances which I have dug up from the journals of that date. The Legislative Assembly and the Council of State were prorogued by Notifn. in August 1923. They met again on 30 Jany. 1924. On the 4 Feb. 1924 a resolution in favour of Mr. Gandhi's release was to have been moved in the Council of State but the mover was persuaded to withdraw this motion in favour of Mr. R. K. Shanmukham Chetti's motion in the Assembly which was ballotted for 5 Feb. 1924 but which was not moved because the same morning Mr. Gandhi had been released. The date of either of these motions could not have been fixed by ballot more than a month in advance. I am not sure about the Council of State, but in the Assembly no motions could have been given notice of or ballotted in Nov. 1923 as the Assembly was not fully formed after the general elections till sometime in Decr. 1923. I am seeking information in the proper quarter as to the earliest date on which it could have been known beforehand that a motion for the release of Mr. Gandhi would be debated in the Council of State on 4 Feb. 1924. I

think the astrologer relied on the Council of State resolution which was to come on 4 Feb. 1924, and he not unnaturally expected that Mr. Gandhi would be released the next day, 7 a. m. being I believe the general hour for the release of prisoners. The Council of State resolution was probably known for some time beforehand in Gandhi circles, and as the sessions of the Council of State, as well as the Assembly, invariably begin on the last days of January, or the first days of February, and private members' resolutions come on very early in the session, the 4 Feby. 1924, as the day for the important debate, was probably not above human calculation or prevision in Nov. 1923. Still, it was a singularly astute hit.

But another explanation occurs to me, and that is why I thought of troubling you. In August 1923, an article appeared in the *Hindu*, a well known Madras English daily, discussing whether the three sentences of two years each under which Mr. Gandhi was undergoing were concurrent or consecutive. The writer had no doubt in his own mind that the sentences should run concurrently; and if they ran concurrently then no doubt Mr. Gandhi would have been released, independently of his illness, in Feby. 1924, as he was imprisoned on 14 March 1922 and 2 years less remission for good conduct would have expired in Feby. 1924. I do not wish to know of any confidential correspondence on the subject, but if there was any reason for the anticipation that the release would take place in the ordinary course in February 1924, and more particularly, if there was any foreseen circumstance connecting the release with 5 Feby.

1924 and if such a circumstance could have been foreseen in Nov. 1923, I shall be much obliged by your letting me know......

In my little brochure which I have enclosed as well as in my larger works, I have, I think, successfully established several other results to which I should like to add this one. What, in particular, would have been the absolute date of Mr. Gandhi's release if his imprisonment was limited to two years and if he received the benefit of good conduct remission? Any other relevant information will highly oblige. [1]

Yours truly,

L. D. SWAMIKANNU PILLAI.

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In 1923 came to light the "Maximum Age of Dhruva Nadi" and in 1924 "Comprehensive Tables for Indian

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1 The following extract from the *Hindu*, June 14, 1930, will be found interesting:

(From our own Correspondent)

Tiruttani, June 13.

"I am informed by Mr. V. K. Satagopachariar, "Gandhi" Astrologer at Tiruttani, who predicted about the arrests of Mahatma Gandhi and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, that Mahatmaji will be released at about 7.30 a. m. on the 10th of July 1930."

Mahatma Gandhi was released, as is well-known, from Yerrawada Jail, on January 26, 1931. He was informed of his release at 7 a. m., but left the Jail only at 11 a. m.

Chronology." These essays were primarily intended for the students of the University of Mysore for whose benefit Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was then delivering a course of twenty lectures. It then occurred to him that by adding letter press to these comprehensive tables and reproducing certain matter of practical utility from his larger works he could publish a book on the Indian Calendar and Indian Astrology at once more accessible to ordinary readers and more suitable for the general reading public than his Indian Chronology. It is the last work of Swamikannu Pillai, and it came out in 1925 under the title of "Panchang and Horoscope."[1] The subjects he deals with, *viz.*, the Indian Calendar and Indian Astrology astronomically considered in the light of first principles, have been hitherto discussed in highly specialized works by European scholars such as Professor Jacobi, Kielhorn, Schram and Sewell. To Mr. Swamikannu Pillai belongs the merit not only of being the first Indian who treated scientifically the whole subject, filling up in this way the gaps left in the works of Dikshit and other Indian scholars, but of exhibiting the principles of the Indian Calendar and Indian Astrology in such a form as to be readily comprehended by the student of modern elementary mathematics.

The very enumeration of all these books, mostly addressed to a class of specialists, is enough to give us an idea of the extensive learning of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai. What is difficult to realize is that the author of such valuable works was no monk living in the seclusion of his monastic cell, but a busy Government officer with heavy responsibilities, and with a large family of thirteen children and several grandchildren to support and educate, who

1 Panchang & Horoscope, Grant & Co., Royapuram, Madras,

devoted to the pursuit of science the few hours he could spare, like the author of the Essays of Elia from the confinement of his 'India House.'

CHAPTER IV

AN INDIAN EPHEMERIS

India is the land of astronomical lore. No doubt Indian Astronomy, that of the ancient Hindus, has been often ignored in modern histories of Astronomy. It is not mentioned in the Encyclopaedia Britannica in which one would expect to find an accurate survey of the progress of all the sciences. Yet astronomy has always been an important study with the Hindus. Long before they came into contact with the conquering Muhammadans and, later on, with European countries, the Jyotisis (astronomers) possessed a vast amount of astronomical information. In the words of M. Thibaut[1] they had achieved as much as the astronomers of Alexandria during the first centuries of our era. They knew that the Earth is spherical; they had an accurate knowledge of the mean revolutions of the planets and could distinguish between their true and mean positions; for calculating the latter they knew the theory of the epicycle, of the eccentric and of the two inequalities of the planetary movements; they could also calculate with precision a number of phenomena of which the eclipses were the most difficult.

1 L'Astronomie Indienne—M. Vermiere, S. J.

Indian Astronomy can be divided into two great periods or epochs—the purely Hindu, and what may be called the Greco-Hindu periods. The first begins with the legendary history of India and extends to the year 400 A. D., and the second lasts from the 5th to the close of the 8th century A. D. The former period is characterised by a deplorable lack of accurate knowledge, while the latter is considered to be distinctly scientific. The following are the sources of Indian Astronomy :

a) The Vedas—1200 B. C. to 400 B. C.

b) The post-Vedic books, that is, the Vedhantas, the Mahabaratha, the Puranas etc.—400 B. C. to 400 A. D.

c) The Sidhantas, or the works of Aryabhatta, Varaha Mihira etc.—400 A. D. to 1100 A. D.

The Vedas, among which the Rig Veda is the most important, do not deal of set purpose with any part of Astronomy. Astronomical notions are scattered here and there within the texture of hymns, among the laws and sacrificial prayers and ceremonies. The post-Vedic books show much progress and contain the germs of scientific accuracy. The Sidhantas are indeed treatises of Astronomy. They reach the maximum of perfection in the Surya Sidhanta which is the great classic, the Almagest of the Hindus.

Astronomy among the ancients, as among the Chaldeans, the Greeks and the Romans was subsidiary to Astrology. Hindu life, more than that of any other people, from the cradle to the grave is governed by the influence of the stars. Even in our own days progress and civilization have not much shaken the belief of Hindus in the power of the heavenly bodies. No wonder if in

Sanskrit books we find Astronomy and Astrology hopelessly interwoven. It was for the sake of Astrology that the Jyotisis devoted themselves to the study of Astronomy. In fact the same name is given to those versed in either science: 'Jyotishya' in the vernaculars of India or in Sanskrit means indifferently an astronomer or an astrologer.

It is regrettable, however, to find that Indian Chronology has been entirely neglected by the Hindus. "One wonders," says Swamikannu Pillai[1] "why the Hindus, who are so scrupulous as to the computation of the passing moment, should not have thought in the past of maintaining some kind of continuous ephemeris like the Fasti of ancient Rome, for verifying the allusions to the lapse of time which are to be met with in literary, and more especially in lithic, records. But history, far from being a favoured pursuit in India, was, until we come to Muhammadan times, almost an avoided subject. It is probably due to this absence of the historical faculty in India's ancient men of letters that no expeditious method was ever devised for verifying calendrical details over long periods of time, and that such methods as have come down to us are of the most primitive and tedious description."

For any chronology, an era is almost absolutely indispensable; for instance, the era of the foundation of Rome (B. C. 753), the Olympiads, the Era of Antioch, the Era of Buddha's Nirvana (B.C. 478) etc. The Hindus had properly speaking no era in the pre-Christian centuries, the Ḳaliyuga as an era (B. C. 3102) being an invention of the 5th or 6th century A. D. and practically unused for a long time subsequently, and the Buddha Era not having been

1 An Indian Ephemeris, Vol. I, Part I—Preface.

brought into use till, at the earliest, the 1st century A. D. The two well-known Indian Eras, the Vikrama (B. C. 57), and Saka (A. D. 78) were also not in common use till long after, and even when they were in use, they are found commonly omitted from the dates of inscriptions. The consequence of this neglect in India of eras is that up to the time of the Muhammadan historians (10th or 11th centuries A. D.) it is very difficult to trace an Indian date except by a series of more or less remote inferences. For this reason although the Indian Ephemeris (Paper No. 4 in Appendix to Volume I, Part I) shows how to recover Buddha's date from the week-day references in Bigandet's Life of Gautama, still the work as a whole is applicable only to the period when inscriptions contain references to week-day, thithi, and nakshatra, i. e., the period since A. D. 700.[1]

In the elaboration of Indian Chronological problems Swamikannu Pillai had no doubt a few eminent predecessors. It must be remembered, however, that the science was still in its infancy and is even at present without a name that can properly be called its own. "Indian Chronology" was the name tentatively adopted by Swamikannu Pillai in his early work which appeared in 1911, but Indian Chronology would properly mean (like Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman or Chinese Chronology) just a series of dates corresponding to historical events and based on inscriptions and ancient records, in the investigation of which Astronomy might play a variable, not, as in India, an invariable part. Messrs. Sewell and Dikshit's work on the subject (1896) was called the "Indian Calendar." This title was appropriate to the scope of that

1 St. Joseph's College Magazine, Trichinopoly, November 1922.

publication, which concerned itself only with an exposition of the contents of the Indian Calendar or panchanga. For a continuation of this work (1912) Mr. Sewell tried a new title 'Indian Chronography', which is scarcely other than Indian Chronology. Col. Warren, a Madras Royal Engineer and the first practical author on the subject (1825), entitled his work Kalasankalita, and Captain Jervis writing some eleven years later (1836) called his treatise Indian Metrology, embracing in its scope a description of Indian measures of length and weight as well as time. Long after the appearance of these works, Professor Hermann Jacobi of Bonn expounded in a series of learned articles which were published in the "Epigraphia Indica" and in the "Indian Antiquary", the theory of the Indian Panchanga in its varied bearings on Chronology. It is interesting to know that the earliest works on the Indian Calendar by any European writers were probably two contemporary pamphlets in Latin by two missionaries, one the famous Father Beschi, the Tamil poet and Jesuit missionary of Madura, and the other Walther, a Lutheran missionary of Tranquebar; these pamphlets are dated 1730-40. The crowning effort in this direction goes to the credit of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai under the new but not wholly satisfactory title of "An Indian Ephemeris."

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'An Indian Ephemeris' appeared in 1922 and was published under the authority of the Government of Madras. The work, as originally designed was to have been issued in seven volumes, including the volume for A. D. 1800 to

A. D. 2000; but the addition of an introductory volume has resulted in the division of Volume I into two parts. The complete work, therefore, actually consists of eight folio volumes and contains over 3000 pages. It is dedicated to the historian of India, for its author believes that any attempt to enable the historian or epigraphist to be his own computer of Thithis and Nakshatras seems predestined to failure. "The historian has not often the aptitude requisite for undertaking such computations: and he has still less often the time necessary for making a number of alternative calculations before selecting the one that rigorously or most nearly satisfies all his data."

It is not our purpose to attempt anything like a summary, or to furnish an estimate of 'An Indian Ephemeris'. Such a task, in view of the unique character of the Indian calendar system and of the many technical complications it presents, may well be considered beyond the ken of any but a specialist. Yet a few remarks seem necessary, and we offer them to the reader the more confidently because they have been put together from the writings of Swamikannu Pillai and from reviews of the Ephemeris, especially from a review by Mr. S. M. Edwards in the Indian Antiquary for October 1923.

The first 150 pages of Volume I, Part I of the Ephemeris; the last 50 pages of the same part one, and about 100 pages of the second part compose the letter press. Part I of the first volume is in reality a new and enlarged edition of Indian Chronology which was published by the author in 1911 and which found a rapid sale in Europe as well as in India, being mentioned as a noteworthy publication in V. A. Smith's "Early India", 1914. It

contains a very full explanation of the principles upon which the author has based his Indian calendar. The whole of the remaining six volumes is taken up with a day-to-day Ephemeris or calendar from A. D. 700 to A. D. 1799, the period from A. D. 1800 to A. D. 2000 being contained in a separate work published by anticipation in 1915. The main object of the Ephemeris, according to its author, is to show for one thousand three hundred years, (1) the eras in use at present in different parts of India—Saka, Vikrama, Kaliyuga, Kollam, Bengal San, Northern and Southern Cyclic years, Hijra and A. D.; (2) the solar month and day of the Tamil and Malayalam calendars; (3) the solar months according to the rasis or constellations of the zodiac; (4) the tithi for each day with its ending moment to two places of decimals, equivalent to half ghatikas; and (5) the nakshatra, with its ending moment; (6) the lunar months and pakshas in use all over India and the neighbouring countries; (7) the Muhammadan months and days of the Muhammadan months; and (8) eclipses, solar and lunar. For every one of these items the English month and day and week-day are given throughout. It also contains a full exposition of a practical, and at the same time, accurate method of ascertaining the actual as well as the mean position of the planets, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn for any date and at any epoch."

The portion of the Introduction devoted to planets and horoscopes deserves special mention for the reason that Swamikannu Pillai is the first investigator who not only demonstrated the possibility of verifying a horoscope chronologically, but showed how to establish the date of a horoscope in which the positions of five or six planets are indicated by their 'rasis' or constellations of the zodiac.

Quite a concrete, and historically a unique example had recently presented itself for testing Swamikannu Pillai's speculations on the horoscope. It is what the author calls the "Paripadal" horoscope from "Paripadal," a Tamil anthology belonging to the best classical period and composed by different poets. This ancient work was for the first time published in print in 1918 by Mahamahopadhya V. Swaminatha Iyer. In the preface to this edition the venerable pandit remarks that "from the positions of the planets indicated in the 11th canto of 'Paripadal' it may be possible to ascertain the age of Sangam literature." That age had been differently conjectured by different scholars and the prevailing opinion, till our author approached the subject with his chronological tests, was that the great Sangam works must have been composed in the 1st century A. D. or even perhaps in the 1st century B. C. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai however has now established, by a complicated but thoroughly reasoned-out process, that the date indicated in "Paripadal" is Friday, 17th June, 634 A. D., while two dates are indicated in "Silappadhikaram," viz., Monday 17th May A. D. 756 and Friday 23rd July A. D. 756 and no less than five dates in January-February A. D. 814 are obtained from "Jivaka Chintamani."

Among the many interesting subjects discussed or referred to in the course of the work are the nature of the Adhika and Kshaya months, the conversion between the solar and lunar reckoning, the planetary and eclipse chronology, and the date of Christ's birth. Swamikannu Pillai maintains that the chronology of St. Dionysius Exiguus, who identified what we now call 1 B. C. (=the year 753 A. U. C. or of the Foundation of Rome) with the year of the birth of Christ, was wrong by at least three or

four years, and that Christ must have been born before the year now spoken of as 4 B. C. (A. U. C. 750). He discusses the common but mistaken belief in the occurrence once in a thousand years of a lunar fortnight with only 13 days,[1] and in the Appendices among other topics, the astronomical references in the Mahabharata and the chronology of early Tamil literature.

As regards the day-to-day calendar, it will suffice to say that the Historian and Epigraphist have at last been furnished with a comprehensive work of reference which gives them the exact English equivalent of any date occurring in ancient Indian records. It offers them a new scientific method by which to verify such dates when found in an Indian inscription, copper-plate, or literary work for a period of two thousand years. Swamikannu Pillai has, indeed, rendered a great service to modern historians who can hardly be expected to be very familiar with a chronological system venerable, no doubt, for its antiquity but which is generally considered too abstruse to be popular.

From a merely practical point of view the Ephemeris has vastly simplified the work of Almanac makers for religious and scientific purposes. The author assures us that an Indian compiler of a panchanga or almanac devotes three months to the preparation of a calendar for

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1 Swamikannu Pillai first drew attention to the fact that the planetary conjunction recounted by Vyasa in the course of his conversation with Dhritarashtra, which heralded the great calamity described in the Mahabharata, was exactly the same as the planetary conjunction which preceded the great European War. But he adds: The occurrence of such a fortnight in July 1914 was known in January 1914 when the new year's panchangas were published; nevertheless, no one then predicted that a great war was coming on in July; the 'prediction' came after the event.—An Indian Ephemeris, Vol. I, Part I.

the next twelve months and according to this method it would take over twice a hundred years to make a calendar for a thousand years. By his new method Swamikannu Pillai found it practicable to compile in one day the material required for ten years' Indian Ephemeris. His work has been regularly used, both in the manuscript stage and in print since 1919 when it began to be printed, by the Madras Epigraphist; and the results have been published every year in the annual report of that department. Swamikannu Pillai's standard work constitutes a landmark in the science of Indian Chronology. The people of this Presidency ought to feel grateful to Government for the official support accorded to the labours of a great citizen. It may be added that Swamikannu Pillai with the consent of the same Government has placed in the Central Record Office the twenty-two manuscript volumes containing the calculations embodied in the six volumes of the Ephemeris.

CHAPTER V

IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Let us retrace our steps and follow up chronologically the narrative of Swamikannu Pillai's life. Strange enough, what was to all appearances its main pursuit, the profession which he had chosen, and which brought him affluence and honours in plenty, seems from the standpoint of biography barren and almost unprofitable. For upwards of thirty years this man of genius rose to ever increasing fame as a distinguished Government Official, yet we have not been able to cull from the records at our disposal any single event of arresting importance, any deed for which he might unquestionably be called one of the great makers of India. The reader, therefore, must not expect a tale of exploits such as is often described in the history of national heroes. The interest of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's life lies in the wide scope and universality of his attainments rather than in the magnitude of the individual actions he performed. It lies in the fact that he was one of the few to whom it is given to touch life on so many sides and to achieve distinction on so many fields.

When the term of his professorship at Trichinopoly expired, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai went to Madras, and

became clerk to the Legislative Council on Rs. 50 a month with an additional salary of Rs. 40 as French Translator in the Secretariat, Fort St. George—a post which he occupied from 1888 to 1890. Mr. F. A. D'Cruz, Retired Superintendent, General Records, was also in the Secretariat at the time, and was by several years senior to Swamikannu Pillai. He relates that one day Mr. Henry K. Beauchamp came to the Records Office and made inquiries about the French manuscript of the Abbé J. A. Dubois's "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies," with a view to its translation into English. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was thereupon introduced to him, and was able with his knowledge of French to render him valuable help in the translation of Dubois's well-known masterpiece. There is no other evidence for the authenticity of this anecdote than that of Mr. D'Cruz, and perhaps the assistance rendered by Mr. Swamikannu Pillai did not amount to more than retouching the translation. At any rate no special mention is made of him by the editor in the Preface to Dubois's work, published in 1899 by the Clarendon Press, where he says: "In conclusion I desire to acknowledge the kind assistance and advice which I have received from many Hindu friends and others while editing the Abbé's work: especially do I desire to acknowledge the help rendered to me by Mr. C. V. Muniswami Iyer, a Brahmin gentleman who associated himself with me in the revision of the proofs."

Swamikannu Pillai's duties as a clerk in the Legislative Council were quite uncongenial to his tastes. He was essentially a scholar, though a needy one, forced to give up the teaching profession in a private Institution because of the more lucrative prospects in Government service. But

he was soon made to realize that his chances to rise in the Secretariat were few and far between; and, dissatisfied with the personnel of the office and with the monotonous drudgery of the work, he accepted in 1890, the post of Lecturer in Latin in the Presidency College. Teaching was indeed his vocation; he knew it, and he therefore tried hard to get a footing in the Provincial Educational Service. But the irony of circumstances, which often plays so large a part in shaping the destiny of man's life, had shut to him all doors of preferment in that Department. As a last resource he competed for the Provincial Civil Service examination, and once more failed to secure the first place which went to his rival Diwan Bahadur R. Ramachandra Rao.

The latter, a distinguished mathematician, had scored full marks in Mathematics, an achievement beyond the reach of any student who, like Swamikannu Pillai, takes History, Political Economy and Philosophy at an examination. All the same the difference between the two rival candidates was only of a few marks. Moreover, Government had not pledged themselves to choose the first on the list, but were free to select any of the three candidates who ranked highest. As Swamikannu Pillai was supposed to be intellectually superior to Ramachandra Rao, his claims were eagerly pressed forward by a section of the people. The controversy was carried on for sometime in the papers and soon moved, as is inevitable in India, from the ground of fitness to that of community and religion. In the end R. Ramachandra Rao was appointed, but it was surmised not without foundation that other influences, besides those of examination results, had come into play in determining his selection to the Civil

Service.[1] Anyway this unexpected reverse was a bitter trial to Swamikannu Pillai who, conscious of his abilities, was striving tooth and nail to find an opening to a more ambitious career. Fortunately he had not long to wait; for he was remembered by Sir Henry Stokes, who had been deeply impressed with his literary and linguistic attainments. The story goes that one day Sir Henry met Swamikannu at the Presidency College, and with a significant smile playing upon his lips asked him the exact words of a quotation from Horace. He promptly gave it continuing the passage to the very end of the context. Shortly afterwards Sir Henry had him appointed to the post of Deputy Collector and Magistrate, in which capacity he was sent to Kurnool towards the end of 1891. Few acts of kindness, if success be the measure of their value, have been bestowed on more deserving persons. From now onwards, it became easy for Swamikannu Pillai to carve his way from one appointment to another and indeed to rise next to the topmost rung of the ladder in Government Service.

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His life as a Divisional Officer was by no means without its trials. At the very start of his career as Deputy Collector, in November 1891, riots broke out in Kurnool known as the Kurnool Grain Riots. Swamikannu Pillai at once took the matter in hand but showed reluctance to resort to force, and tried to quell the disturbance by persuasive methods. He did before long succeed to pacify

[1] This controversy was discussed in the Madras Mail for April 22, 1890.

all parties concerned by a personal appeal both to the rioters and to the shopkeepers. The District Superintendent of Police, however, for some unaccountable reasons took a different view of the affair, and reported to Government that the tumult would have been nipped in the bud had the Divisional Officer been more energetic and given orders to the police to open fire on the mob. From the sequel we are much inclined to believe that Mr. Stoddard, the Police Officer acted hastily and was not entirely free from prejudice in his Report. Swamikannu Pillai was of course called upon to submit an explanation to Government which, together with an account of the facts submitted by the District Collector, Mr. Charles Kough, was in the end accepted as satisfactory. An abstract from the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue No. 3568 (abstract—Land Revenue) dated 9—6—1892, says: "Riot—Hindu Mahommedan at Kurnool—Government order judicial recording report of District Magistrate on recent riots and observing the remarks of that Officer that the conduct of the Deputy Magistrate was justified. Recorded."

The Report of Swamikannu Pillai to Government on his action in connection with the riots is a lengthy and elaborate composition, a kind of judicious apologia worded in clear and strong language. It reveals independence of judgment, boldness and withal a perfect balance of mind and temper. It is written on thick blue paper and contains, in a foot-note, a few lines of Sir Henry Stokes to the effect that the Report is a complete justification of the conduct of the Divisional Officer. Needless to say there were hostile critics too who found the defence more spirited than is expected of such documents. Be that as it may, from a perusal of the papers relating to the Kurnool Grain Riots

of 1891 it is clear that Swamikannu Pillai's conduct met with approval. He is praised for acting with promptitude and courage and for having done his best to restore order. "He behaved well," the papers say, "on that trying occasion though he was then a very young and junior officer."

Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was Deputy Collector on general duty at Kurnool till March 1892 when he was appointed Treasury Deputy Collector at the same station. In August 9th, contrary to all expectations, he received letters from the District Collector ordering him to leave Kurnool immediately, as he puts it in his Diary which he now wrote in French "au plus tôt possible."[1] It would seem that these orders were either never issued or immediately revoked, for we find that the storm, which had raged furiously during the last few months, suddenly passed off, and Swamikannu Pillai continued undisturbed in his office as Deputy Collector during the remaining part of the year. He left Kurnool in December 1892.

But other and perhaps more bitter adversities tried his patience and endurance at this time. In March 1892 his wife fell seriously ill after giving birth to their third child, Mary Rose.[2] In spite of the best medical assistance she

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1 Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was, at this time, a great diarist like Pepys and John Wesley. Unfortunately from a biographer's point of view, his later journals do no longer narrate the events of each day but deal with his studies and contain copious notes on Indian Chronology, Astrology and on the Co-operative movement.

2 Mr. Swamikannu Pillai had three daughters by his first wife.—i) Mary Louisa, born 16th June 1888 married to Mr. C. M. Antonimuthu Pillai, Manager, Office of the Inspector-General of Prisons. Now a widow and working as Headmistress, Corporation Girls' School, Nungumbaukam, Madras; ii) Mary Teresa, born on 17th June 1889, wife of Mr. T. A. Ratnaswami Pillai, Sub-Inspector of Police; iii) Mary Rose, born on 29th March 1892, married to Mr. D. A. G. Ratnam, B. A., LL. B., Advocate.

passed away on the 6th of April of that year. The sad event cast a shadow upon his life. They had been married scarcely five years and he found himself a widower at the age of 27. On the 10th of June, the fifth anniversary of his marriage, he wrote: "Five years have sufficed to realize and to close the expectations of that day." The old idea of devoting himself to the service of God by becoming a Priest or entering a Religious Order came back to his mind. He frequently refers to, and writes about it in his journal; he even tells us of a dream in which his late wife appeared to him saying that it would have been to the greater glory of God, if they had carried out a resolution they had formed of separating from one another in order to join some religious Institution. But the difficulties which had stood in his way earlier in life did not permit now a change of the old decision. He was too poor and had many poor relatives depending on him.

With lapse of time the days of mourning passed away and we read of hours of sunshine and happiness at Kurnool when the young Divisional Officer with a gun, and in company of a party of shikaris, would enjoy his holidays in the Nallamalai forests, where tigers, bears and all sorts of smaller game abound, or go afishing along the banks of the Tungabhadra and the Hindri. There were occasional picnics to the tomb of Abdul Vahab, and to the ruins of the Kurnool ancient Fort that reminds the visitor of the great Vijayanagar kings. Sometimes the picnics turned into longer and more ambitious excursions to the historical Hindu temples at Shrisalam and Ahobilam on the Nallamalais. Indeed there was fascination about the life of this brilliant young Civilian who could already speak to each man of the District in his different language; who

corresponded with some of his friends in Latin and German, kept a Diary in French and could sportingly write, June 14, 1892: "Je fumai mon premier cigar—un d'un certain nombre qui avait été pris d'un 'warder' qui les portai a un prisonnier." He was already a Master of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws of the Madras University and began seriously to prepare for the Inter LL. B., London, for which purpose, he says he has made up his mind to devote "one hour every day to each of the following subjects—Constitutional History, Roman Law and Jurisprudence."

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Swamikannu Pillai's administrative abilities at this time may not have made a remarkable impression in Government circles, but the same cannot be said of his official Reports, of the breadth and originality of his ideas, the versatility of his mind and his power of organization. From the correspondence in our possession, it is evident that these characteristic talents were day by day gaining ground for him at Madras, where we find him in 1893 and 1894 as acting Registrar in the Secretariat. In April of the year 1895 he was placed on special duty in the office of the Board of Revenue and appointed Assistant Secretary to the same Board in 1896, a post which he held for ten years from 1896 to 1906. As a recognition of his meritorious services he received from the Government, in 1905, the title of Rai Bahadur. It has been pointed out by many who worked with him and under him in the Secretariat that this period more than any other in his official career marks the beginning of his greatness as a Government servant. The

vast erudition of his mind, the grasp of complicated problems and the ease with which he could set them forth in his Reports, always suggestive and illuminating, made him almost indispensable to the Revenue Board. That we are not indulging in mere exaggerations is apparent from the letters which at the end of these eleven years passed between the Hon'ble Mr. A. G. Cardew, I. C. S., and the Hon'ble Mr. A. E. Castlestuart Stuart, I. C. S.

When in 1906 the post of Secretary to the Board of Revenue fell vacant, Mr. Cardew wrote to his friend the Hon'ble Mr. Stuart: "I am to ask you whom you would recommend to be appointed permanently as your Secretary on the retirement of Ramanujachariar. I am to mention confidentially that it is possible that Venkatramana Das Nayudu, the present Diwan of Pudukottai, who was an applicant for the post last year, may have to vacate Pudukottai at the end of the year. The answer from Mr. Stuart came at once: "In reply to your D. O. No. 2287 A/06—I, I write to say that I would strongly recommend L. D. Swamikannu Pillai to be appointed permanently as my Secretary on the retirement of Ramanuja-chariar in preference to S. Venkatramana Das Nayudu or any other member of the Madras Provincial Civil Service."

In due course the Rai Bahadur received his appointment and became Secretary to the Board of Revenue. Meanwhile his academic qualifications, to which he had added the LL. B. of London in 1910, were also recognized by the University of Madras which made him a member of the Senate and three years later, Chairman of the Board of Examiners in Greek, Latin, French, and German. In 1909 he was once more honoured by the King-Emperor and offered the title of "Diwan Bahadur."

We hinted in the beginning of this chapter at a supposed absence of real greatness in the achievements of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai as a Government servant. There is one notable exception to our remarks. His name will be associated for good with that of the Co-operative Movement which he built up in this Presidency and which to this day retains the features he stamped upon it and the lines of development along which he directed its course. But for his studious avoidance of the lime-light, the great undertaking of organizing in the Province of Madras a a system of central banks, primary societies and federations with a view to free the riots from the clutches of the money-lenders would have been sufficient to give him the foremost rank among the eminent men of the Presidency. One can see from the papers he has left that two leading ideas were at this period uppermost in his mind supplying a never failing stimulus to his activities. They were his scientific studies, and the Co-operative Movement. Of his work in connection with the latter we shall presently offer a more detailed account.

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The narrative of this part of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's life would be incomplete, if it did not touch, though in passing, upon the joys and sorrows that are inseparable from a home. Now that he was a busy Government official, the three infant daughters of his first marriage needed the loving cares and affection of a mother. He was fortunate enough to find one in Miss Anna Rose whom he married on January 24, 1896, at Erode in the Church

of the Immaculate Conception. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai had from her three sons and eight daughters all of whom are living save Margaret Mary who died in 1901 before completing the third year of her age. The loss of this little angel marked the beginning of a long series of troubles and trials of which, throughout life, Swamikannu Pillai had to endure more than a man's ordinary share. It was inevitable if we bear in mind that besides his own many children he had a large number of grand children, twenty in all, whose wants often called for his help and assistance. But he was a man of deep religious faith who accepted the sorrows of existence from the same loving Providence that gives us also its joys. It is touching to read the notes of his journal when, as it too often happened, either sickness or misfortune paid visits to any of the members of his family. Sometimes it was death who came sudden, like a thief. On such occasions he found comfort in prayer especially in the prayer of Our Lord in Gethsemani: "Thy will be done." It is in this spirit of humble submission to God that he refers to the death of his father which took place on December 16, 1901. Mr. Louis Pillai's first wife had died in Madras in 1894. He married a second time in the following year leaving now behind him an unprovided widow and two children whom Swamikannu Pillai received as members of his own household. Undoubtedly peace, love and happiness reigned at Rose Ville, Royapuram, but there were trials too, there was sufferance, the badge of our human race.

We shall close this chapter with a narrative of Swamikannu Pillai's first trip to Europe at the end of August 1903. He reached England in the middle of September, and on the 3rd November crossed over to the

Continent. On the 8th November he was in Rome, when he had the privilege of being present at a public audience by His Holiness Pope Pius X. The next day he was received in private audience. We must allow him to relate what he calls the 'most memorable event' of his life.

"At the appointed hour (3.30 p. m.) I presented, myself at the door of Mgr. Bisleti, who, on the recommendation of his Excellency, had kindly undertaken to introduce me to His Holiness. We went by a number of stairs, meeting at each turn a batch of Pontifical Guards and finally we arrived at the Reception Room. Leaving me here, Mgr. Bisleti went, as he very simply informed me, to fetch His Holiness. Left to my own reflections in this situation, which I had pictured to myself in my dreams for over thirty years, I fell a prey to unutterable confusion of thoughts and ideas: and–I will not pretend to conceal it from you—to a good deal of nervousness. What principally occupied my thoughts during the time of waiting, was the attempt to conjure up the hosts of men and events that, some time or other, had figured in this room and had thence passed into the undying page of history. While I was still plunged in these thoughts, I became aware, rather than saw, that His Holiness was approaching. On his right was an officer of his court in civil uniform, on his left was Mgr. Bisleti. His Holiness paused for a moment to look at a bust of himself which had been recently executed and which was placed in an antechamber. When His Holiness entered the Reception Room I received His blessing kneeling. He very graciously touched my hands and almost at the same instant took from me the address of the Madras Catholic Indian Association (in English and Latin). His Holiness turned

over the pages of the address, looked at the signatures, and then said in French, that he was highly gratified to receive this address, and that He cordially blessed all the Catholics in India. He wished that His blessing should be conveyed to His Grace the Archbishop of Madras, the President of the Madras Catholic Indian Association, as well as to Mgr. Zaleski, the Delegate Apostolic. After humbly receiving His Holiness's parting benediction, I quitted the Vatican full of gratitude to God Who had given me the opportunity of securing so notable a favour."

With characteristic modesty which never deserts him whenever he speaks of himself, Swamikannu Pillai omits to narrate a little incident that did not pass unnoticed in Vatican circles. His Holiness had been informed that the visitor from India could speak French and accordingly began the conversation in the then diplomatic language of Europe. Casually, however, the Pope said a few words in Latin and was promptly answered with graceful ease by Swamikannu Pillai in true Roman accents. With a kindly smile Pius X eyed his interlocutor and, this time, deliberately began to speak Italian. We may well imagine his surprise in finding that Italian too was not unfamiliar to Swamikannu Pillai who was able to continue the conversation in the Pope's own language.

CHAPTER VI

REGISTRAR AND DISTRICT COLLECTOR

Towards the year 1890 it became more evident than it had been heretofore in India that, in spite of the rapid growth of commerce and improvements in communication, the economic condition of the peasants had not progressed in any remarkable degree. Indebtedness and usury were on the increase, agricultural methods had not bettered and the old unsatisfactory features of a backward rural economy gave apparently no signs of amelioration. The more obvious features of this state of things presented themselves in the form of usury and land-grabbing on the part of the money-lending classes, while the agricultural classes either hoarded their savings or, owing to thriftlessness and indebtedness, showed themselves unable to withstand bad seasons and to meet organized trade on equal terms. The depression of the rural classes was further accentuated by a meek acceptance of oppression at the hands of those who occupied a better position. In other words, the rural classes continued to evince a traditional subservience to the past and a lack of ideals for the future. This kind of inertia in the large masses of the country attracted the attention of the Government and

various remedies were tried with a view to improve their material condition. (1) A system of State Loans was introduced; (2) Post Office Savings Banks were opened; (3) the Civil Law relating to debt was frequently and extensively amended; (4) special Legislation was enacted at various times in different areas to deal with tenants' rights, alienation of land, general settlement of debt and curbing of usury. Although much benefit was obtained from some of these measures, the general effect was very partial and incomplete. Government, therefore, found it necessary without abandoning the above mentioned measures to turn to Co-operation as the most hopeful method of dealing with the problem in question.

The Madras Government was the first to grasp the possibilities of a Co-operative Movement in India, and, in March 1892, placed Sir Frederick Nicholson, then Collector of Anantapur, on special duty to study the theory and practice of agricultural and other land banks in Europe, and to suggest means by which a similar movement might be popularized in this country. The Madras Presidency afforded a hopeful field for experiment because a number of indigenous societies known as the Nidhis were already in existence and had some measure of success.

In 1897 Sir Frederick Nicholson issued an exhaustive report on the systems prevalent in Europe, which still constitutes an invaluable source of information regarding European practices. From it a more or less complete idea can be gained of the Co-operative Movement as developed on the Continent and more especially of the lines on which Co-operative credit was organized by the German reformer, Raiffeisen. This Report—the standard work on Agricultural Banks—was subjected

to scathing criticism by the Board of Revenue of the Madras Government. The considered opinion of the Board seemed to be that the village banks proposed were thoroughly impracticable; that it was by no means certain that the scheme would do any good; that what little thrift the ryots had would disappear and the total volume of their indebtedness increase. On the whole, the Board thought that the last state of the agricultural population would be worse than their first.

The Madras Government evidently unable to decide on these conflicting views compromised by placing a sum of Rs. 2,000 at Sir Nicholson's disposal to experiment with the proposed village banks. But no such experiment could be made for the obvious reason that in the absence of any law it was not possible to organize a bank, as there was no means to keep the members together or to define their duties and rights. The Companies' Act of 1882 with its 256 sections and elaborate provisions was wholly unsuited to societies of this kind, and the Government of Lord Curzon was not long in satisfying itself that special legislation was necessary. An All-India Committee under Sir Edward Law was appointed to go into the question and to make proposals after considering the opinions of local governments and the experience of officers who had already started societies. The conclusion at which they arrived after their meeting at Naini-Tal was that co-operative societies were worthy of encouragement and of a prolonged trial. They drew up model schemes of management for both rural and urban societies and discussed the form of legislation needed to secure to societies the privileges which they recommended and to provide for them due working and supervision. Their recommendations formed

the basis of the Bill which was passed into Law in 1904—the Co-operative Credit Societies Act, Act X of 1904. Along with the Act, the Government issued an explanatory memorandum drawn up by Sir Denzil Ibbetson. It was explained that the cardinal object of the Act was to create a genuine Indian movement based on those broad general principles which must necessarily underlie any organization claiming to be called Co-operative. Experiments were to be freely allowed, and more particularly for the furtherance of agriculture rather than industrial credit. Societies were classified as rural and urban, and while the latter were left a free choice, the former were bound to accept unlimited liability. In ordinary cases the areas of societies were to be closely restricted. They were given a legal personality and authorized to raise funds and carry on business in a corporate capacity. Loans might be made to members on personal or real security, but not ordinarily on chattel security. An annual official audit was made compulsory. The interest of any member in the share capital of the Society was strictly limited and special exemptions from the provisions of the Stamp Act, the Registration Act and the Income-Tax Act were conceded.

The local Governments at once set to work to give practical force to the intentions of the Act. The first step was to appoint Registrars in the various provinces to spread the co-operative propaganda, to start a few model societies, and to train up the rural population in the proper methods of management. In the Madras Presidency the new department began to work in 1906 with Sir P. Rajagopalacharya as Registrar and Mr. V. K. Vijayaraghavacharya as his assistant. Sir P. Rajagopalacharya continued in office till 1907, and in 1908 Diwan Bahadur R. Ramachandra Rao

was appointed who continued in office for two years. In 1911 the post became once more vacant, and Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai was selected for it. No better choice could have been made. In the opinion of all he was the right man in the right place, and this opinion was fully confirmed by the course of events.

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Hitherto Swamikannu Pillai's work had been of the sedentary kind. The new appointment obliged him to travel to the remotest parts of the Presidency and gave him unique opportunities to know the various races and communities which compose the fifty millions of its vast territory. He studied their customs and their needs, and his kind, sympathetic heart prompted him to exert himself for the furtherance of their interests. His mastery of the literature on co-operation in English, French and German enabled him to do much pioneer work, and he took, moreover, infinite pains to popularize the scheme by frequent tours and lectures. There is little doubt that the new appointment contributed to bring out the best elements of his nature, his keen insight into the economic condition of the rural population, his unerring grip on reality as well as his calm, unflinching courage to face the difficulties of an unpopular movement. For, although Government found it necessary to start the Co-operative Societies, it did not for a long time give them a whole-hearted support. Their modern popularity in South India is Swamikannu Pillai's crowning achievement. At first he had to carry on his work in the midst of discouraging

circumstances such as inadequate supervisory staff, a poor office establishment and the general apathy with which public bodies, and even Government, usually look upon a department which cannot show brilliant results all at once. It also revealed in him certain unexpected traits; a great deal of initiative and originality, tact, urbanity and organizing capacity which gained him friends, stimulated the zeal of honorary workers and made the whole thing look like, what it was in large measure, a people's affair and not merely the product of officialdom. It made it clear that he had enough imagination to penetrate below the surface of observed facts, visualize the problem in its essential features and future possibilities.

The very first report he submitted to Government was a proof of his insight and breadth of outlook. "The moral boon", he wrote, "of co-operation is even greater. The societies enable people who were hitherto at the mercy of the usurer to live in peace and contentment and to put by some money; they enable the cultivator who carried home his produce only to hand it over to his sowcar at three-fourths of its price (not paid to him, but adjusted to his account), to store it till he can sell it to advantage and live upon the proceeds for the rest of the year. The societies enable people, who, for generations, paid debts contracted at marriages performed 50 or 60 years ago, to marry decently without becoming debtors for the rest of their natural lives. The societies have introduced ideas of thrift, sobriety and cleanliness into villages which were hitherto strangers to civilization .....It may be asked why, if the movement offers such tangible benefits, it does not catch like wild-fire. No good thing ever catches like wild-fire, and the only element of suspicion about the

co-operative movement is that it does catch on in unexpected quarters and in unexpected ways, so that occasionally a sowcar, who came to a meeting to curse, goes home, heading the list of applicants for an unlimited liability society." Surveying the field of operation, he wrote on another occasion: "There are still large tracts of the Presidency which have not been entered upon by co-operative officials, because working in compact areas, where there are societies already in existence, pays better, co-operatively, than turning the sod in isolated tracts and leaving the seedlings to the mercy of chance."

Some idea of how he covered this field may be gained by a comparison of figures. When he took charge of the department, there were three central societies with a membership of 1,263; 28 urban societies, cash and others, limited and unlimited, with 7,521 members; 377 rural societies, limited and unlimited, with a total of 30,085 members. The total working capital stood at Rs. 33,18,893 and the reserve fund was Rs. 1,13,982. In the Annual Report for 1915-16, we read of 11 central banks, 31 supervising unions, 1,36,286 individual members in 1,769 societies. The working capital of all societies had risen to Rs. 168.89 lakhs, the paid-up capital to Rs. 16.12 lakhs and the reserve fund to Rs. 50 lakhs (estimated). Other indications of progress were—the growth of the non-agricultural movement represented by 50 town-banks with a total working capital, mostly self-raised, of Rs. 12.37 lakhs; the addition of several societies not belonging to the familiar types of credit and store and, best of all, the beginning of a movement in favour of building societies. Madras had actually the strongest reserve fund of any province in the Indian Empire. It must in addition be

remembered that this was the period when he was deep immersed in the calculations of his Indian Chronology, and that Government often turned a deaf ear to his repeated request for a very modest increase of staff. One wonders how with the help of the five gazetted officers, temporarily lent to the department, he could carry on an intense educative propaganda for awakening popular zeal and submit proposals on the one hand, for meeting the demand of more societies and, on the other, for not deferring to apply to co-operation the principle of every sound economic movement, namely, that it should pay for its own growth and expansion. As a result of this many-sided activity the files on his office table showed a tendency to mount up to the ceiling; but he had a way of turning them down by a quick but accurate disposal of them in two or three short afternoons of a week. One cannot help admiring his prodigious energy, his thorough mastery and quick grasp of the problems submitted to him, his command of language too, which lent itself to the terse and elegant expression of his ideas; in one word the magic of his personality which everywhere evoked enthusiastic popular response.

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While in the midst of his career as registrar of Co-operative Societies he was invited by the Chancellor of the University, Lord Pentland, to deliver the Convocation Address to the graduates of 1913 and, in March 1916, was asked to give the Sir S. Subrahmaniam Lectures for the Madras University, on the "Vedanga Jyotisha Calendar." The latter were incorporated as Appendix (1) in the

Ephemeris. The Convocation Address attracted attention, and His Excellency voiced the opinion of all when in his words of thanks at the public function itself, and afterwards in a private letter, he said that he considered the Address as one of the best that had been delivered to University graduates.

In pursuance of a new policy of appointing a greater number of Indian Collectors and District Magistrates, Government sent Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, in 1917, to Nellore as Collector and District Magistrate. At the same time his eminent services were once more taken notice of, and a new honour was conferred on him by the award of the I. S. O. medal. He was Collector for two years, 1917-1919. Little can be said of him during this period except, perhaps, that his administration did not come up to that measure of success which had been anticipated of his attainments. It was the time when the Non-Co-operation Movement had reached its highest. In March 1919 occurred the disturbances in the Punjab which brought about the proclamation of Martial Law followed by the Commission of Inquiry into its administration. The action of General Dyer at Jallianwallah Bagh and the atrocities alleged to have accompanied the suppression of the disturbances formed the occasion for wide spread agitation all over the country. In Nellore there was enmity between the Hindus and the Muhammadans accompained by fatalities. Swamikannu Pillai did not find it easy to uphold the principles of cold, rigorous justice under such conditions. A letter from Government dated June 27, 1919 makes no mystery about his want of success, it says: "The Government much regret to have to record their opinion

that your Local Fund administration of the Nellore District has not been efficient." For one thing, as Rao Bahadur A. V. Govindan, Assistant Director of Fisheries, and for many years his intimate friend, once put it: "Swamikannu Pillai was too godly and too kind to be an efficient custodian of the law." He always showed at his best when engaged in working for the benefit of the people, improving their conditions, organizing and directing their activities. He was, in fact, a missionary, a worker and a scholar more than a ruler.

Notwithstanding his, so-called inefficient administration of Nellore, he was highly esteemed by the Government who freely made use of his services in nearly all offices for which an able man was urgently needed. On November 20th he is informed that he will be placed on special duty under the Reforms Commissioner, and on the 25th of the same month he is asked to serve on a committee for discussing the proposal for the establishment of a training college for teachers of vernacular languages. Few, in fact, were during these years the Government undertakings of any kind to which Swamikannu Pillai was not invited to contribute his support and assistance. Perhaps the following letter from Lord Pentland, written on the eve of his departure from Madras, affords the strongest testimony, if any be needed, of the love and esteem in which he was held by the supreme authority of the Presidency:

GOVERNOR OF MADRAS

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
MADRAS.

March 26. '19.

Dear Mr Swamikannu Pillai

Will you pray accept my cordial thanks for all your generous help and counsel in our work during my time here, with heartiest good wishes to you and your family for the years to come?

I am.
Sincerely yours

Pentland.

In 1920 Swamikannu Pillai was appointed Secretary to Government for a few months during the absence of the permanent Secretary, and immediately afterwards Director of Agriculture for the whole Presidency. The latter post afforded him again fresh opportunities for excursions, of which he made the best use by turning his attention to the needs of the country and devising new plans for the welfare of the rural population. It was at this time that the writer once found himself travelling in a third class railway carriage in company of the Diwan Bahadur. When some surprise was evinced at meeting him in a third class compartment, he promptly replied that it was the best way to get to know the needs and grievances of the people and added: "I can learn more from the third than from the average second and first class passengers."

Swamikannu Pillai was now 55 years of age of which he had spent 28 in Government Service. As he had to retire at the end of the year he took steps to be enrolled as a Pleader of the High Court, for which he possessed all necessary qualifications. His application does not seem to have been successful on the score that the High Court did not think it had power to exempt him completely from the course of apprenticeship demanded by the Rules. His services, however, were much needed by Government which, on November 20, requested him as already stated, to accept special duty under the Reforms Commissioner. We shall presently deal with the Reforms and the work of Swamikannu Pillai in the Legislative Council. His duty under the present appointment was to study the organization of the various departments of the new administration and submit proposals for framing the Rules of the Council staff.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Just when Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's lengthy and distinguished career was setting below the horizon, there was dawning a new era in the history of India. For a long time the aspirations of the people to a measure of self-government had found expression in the press and through the political organizations of the country, but it was only after the beginning of the Great War, in 1914, that the movement for Swaraj took a sudden and remarkable development. The outbreak of hostilities was for a time accompanied by manifestations of loyalty from all classes and creeds of the nation's teeming millions. In particular the chiefs and notables of this Presidency laid their resources at the disposal of His Majesty, and the Madras War Fund, instituted at the instance of His Excellency the Governor, received subscriptions amounting to Rs. 27 lakhs, in the first ten months, and finally reached Rs. 74.63 lakhs by the 31st March 1919. As the war went on and the need of men became greater, a regular recruiting agency was organized by means of which the Presidency contributed 32,718 combatants and 28,895 non-combatants to the Indian Army.

The year 1916 heralded a revival of the Home Rule agitation backed by systematic efforts to stir up ill-will against the existing Government and, for the same object, to work on the feelings of the student population. To counteract the activities of extremists the Government promptly took action under both the Press Act of 1910 and the Defence of India Act. The excesses of the extreme political group eventually roused opposition and, to a great extent, led to the organization of the non-Brahman party and its subsequent rise to power. But it was daily becoming more evident that the wishes of the nation voiced through its accredited representative, the Indian National Congress, could no longer be ignored in Westminster Hall and in Whitehall. The Right Hon'ble Mr. Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, made, in the Parliament of August 20th, 1917, the historic announcement on the development of India along self-governing lines:

> "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

This now famous utterance—the sincerity of which it is not our purpose to contest—was received in an atmosphere saturated with a very elevated degree of political disturbance and mutual recriminations. In the following year took place the official visit to India of the

Secretary of State. The object of the visit was to discuss the principles of constitutional reform with the Viceroy and the Government, to enquire into the views of Local Governments and to receive the suggestions of representative bodies as well as of prominent leaders from the different schools of political thought. It led in the end to the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of Indian Constitutional Reforms and to the presentation of definite proposals to Parliament, the supreme legislative authority of the British Commonwealth. Basing itself on these recommendations the House of Commons passed the Government of India Act of 1919, by which, among other changes, each of the principal Provinces was given a new constitution. It consists of a dual system of authority or dyarchy—a term that came in for a good deal of criticism—made up of an Executive and a Legislative Council.

The Executive Civil Government, which continues to be subject to the superintendence and control of the Governor General in Council was given power on certain subjects which were declared to be provincial and which, again, were divided into 'reserved' and 'transferred' subjects. The administration of the former was placed in the hands of the Governor-in-Council and that of the latter in those of the Governor acting with his Ministers. The Council includes the Governor and four members, and they are appointed by the Crown. The Ministers are chosen by the Governor ordinarily from among the leaders of the party that commands a majority in the Legislative Council. They must not be members of the Executive Council nor officials, and no minister can hold office for a longer period than six months unless he is, or becomes, an elected member of the local legislature.

The Legislative Council, which was made a separate body having an independent existence of its own, consists of 98 elected and 30 nominated members of whom not more than 19 may be officials. It has power, subject to the provisions of the Act, to make laws for the peace and good government of the Province; but no legislation which affects any Act of Parliament is permissible. In order, however, to ensure uniformity in India and to safeguard the observance of the general policy of the country, a large measure of control over matters affecting broader issues was retained in the hands of the Central Legislature. The Legislative Council was given a President, in the first instance and for the period of four years, appointed by the Governor, but thereafter to be elected by the Council from among the members and approved by the Governor.

In pre-Reform days it was generally possible for the Government to pass any measure which it considered necessary and to prevent the passing of any measure which it regarded as injurious or unsound. With a large non-official majority these powers no longer remain, but other safeguards for use in emergency cases were provided in the power given to the Governor, under certain provisions of the Act, to Certify or to Veto any Bill or any clause of, or amendment to it.

It is the exercise of these extraordinary powers, to which it was judged necessary to resort in recent years, that has aroused feelings of resentment and diffidence in political circles and a good deal of unrest in the country.

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Men of uncommon ability and experience were now

needed to set in motion the many wheels of the new complicated machinery. Fortunately it was not very difficult for the Government of Madras, the only Province in which the new experiment attained a measure of success, to select the right persons, and they found in Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai a man cut out for a large share of the work. His sixteen years in the Secretariat and his well-known power of organization, apart from other personal gifts, singled him out as the man of the hour. Indeed, he himself, when about to retire from Public Service, had foreseen and even told some of his friends, that with the coming Reforms they would stand in need of his services. His anticipations were fulfilled when the Legislative Council came into being, on the 17th December 1920, with Sir P. Rajagopalachari, one of the ablest administrators of modern India, as President, and with Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai as its first Secretary.

He remained Secretary to the Council from 1920-1923, the three first years of its infancy and consequently of much organization and pioneer work. The promptness with which each succeeding volume of the printed Proceedings of the Council, especially after his return from England, came out of the press almost as soon as the Council's sittings were over, testify to his capacity and clock-like regularity. That his labours were highly valued is shown conclusively by the many appreciations of persons competent to speak on the subject. In his final farewell speech to the Legislative Council, Sir P. Rajagopalachari said: "I desire also to mention with gratitude the co-operation of those who have been aptly described as being in the House though not of it, namely the Secretary

of the Council and his staff." The Hon'ble Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Leader of the House, in moving the Resolution of Condolence at the meeting of the Council on October 17, 1925, observed: "In that capacity any one of us who came across him and derived assistance from his intellectual equipment and his thorough knowledge of procedure would not find it very difficult to say what great assistance he rendered to every one in the House from the President to the humblest member of it." Mr. C. Ramalinga Reddi remarked: "I know he very often helped us in drafting our questions and our resolutions and other motions so that they might be regular."

Recognizing the extraordinary mental powers and the special ability which L. D. Swamikannu Pillai displayed as Secretary of the Council, the Government deputed him to go to England for the purpose of studying Parliamentary Procedure. He sailed from Colombo at the beginning of April 1922, and returned to Madras on August 23 of the same year. Arrangements had been made with the Secretary of State for India to secure him the necessary facilities to carry out the objects of his deputation. The Hon'ble Sir P. Rajagopalachari, the President of the Legislative Council, whom Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was to have accompanied on the same steamer was unavoidably delayed in this country owing to illness and only later was able to join his Secretary in England. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai arrived in London on April 26 and at once proceeded to make the acquaintance of the Under-Secretary for India, Earl Winterton. The latter introduced him in turn to the Speaker's Secretary, Col. R. Verney, C. I. E., a former Military Secretary to the Viceroy, and to the Clerk of the

House of Commons, Sir Lonsdale Webster, K. C. B. As Sir P. Rajagopalachari put it, he soon became known in the House of Commons as the 'Webster of Madras.' There were a number of visitors in London about the same time from other parts of India who were also bent on a similar purpose of studying Parliamentary Procedure. But Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was the only one who had been placed in deputation by a Provincial Legislature. Earl Winterton took charge of the non-official visitors, and the Speaker's Secretary, the genial Col. Verney, as Swamikannu Pillai calls him, looked after the deputy from Madras. He was thus favoured with an order of admission to what is called 'the Speaker's' or 'distinguished strangers' gallery,' which is capable of accommodating not more than six or seven persons at a time. The application had to be renewed each time, and, as Swamikannu Pillai himself says, 'It is true I never met with a refusal at his (the Secretary's) hands, but in the end I was rather ashamed of the triple brass which emboldened me to ask unabashed for tickets day after day for six or seven weeks.'

Sir P. Rajagopalachari alluded to the part played by his Secretary when, after his return to India, he remarked in a speech: "I have not had the same opportunity that Mr. Swamikannu Pillai has had for the study of Parliamentary Procedure. I found, when I got to England, that Mr. Swamikannu Pillai had made such progress that there was no chance of my overtaking him; and when I saw the Speaker, he told me that while he sat every day at one end of the House, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai sat every day at the other end, and that having grown so accustomed to see Mr. Swamikannu Pillai, he would miss him greatly."

The importance of his visit to England, judging from

the scanty notice which was taken at the time by the press, does not seem to have been sufficiently realized, but it is now well-known that as a result of it Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was able to introduce a number of improvements into the working of the Madras Legislative Council. Chief among them was the prompt issue of the Council proceedings which, the Hon'ble the President, on November 13, 1922, announced to the House, "would be made available to the members on the next day but one after each meeting." Another welcome improvement was the starting of a well-equipped and up-to-date library. At Swamikannu Pillai's suggestion an allotment of Rs. 10,000 was provided for this purpose in the Budget of 1922-1923 out of which about 1000 standard books were purchased. These were afterwards carefully catalogued and indexed, and he saw to it that books on Parliamentary Procedure, on Politics and Constitutions, on Economics and on subjects of social interest were well represented in the new library. Second-hand copies of several useful publications no longer in print had been already secured by him during his stay in England.

We must not omit to mention the series of lectures which, soon after his return, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was invited to deliver up and down the Presidency on the working of the House of Commons. First in importance is the one given under the auspices of the Madras Publicity Bureau with His Excellency Lord Willingdon, Governor of Madras, in the chair at the Council Chamber, Fort Saint George, on November 14, 1922. In introducing Mr. Swamikannu Pillai who, he promptly added, required no introduction, His Excellency said among other things: "But I must tell you that from the

information I have received, I think we have got full value for our money when we agreed to send Mr. Swamikannu Pillai to England. I have heard both from the Speaker himself and from his Private Secretary that our Legislative Council Secretary was untiring in his attendance day by day at the debates of the House of Commons and that his appetite for gaining information on all kinds of matters of procedure was absolutely voracious and never to be appeased." (Cheers).

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While on his deputation in England Swamikannu Pillai took the opportunity of the Whitsuntide holidays for a tour to Germany and France. Its immediate occasion was the arrival of Sir Rajagopalachari who had just landed at Marseilles in very poor health. From there he sent a telegram to Swamikannu Pillai with instructions to join him at Royat, a watering place near the Loire and among the hills, where he had been advised by his doctors to proceed at once. Swamikannu Pillai reached Royat on May 25, found Sir Rajagopalachari suffering from symptoms of blood-pressure but already showing signs of improvement and, after remaining a few days in his company, left Royat for his proposed travels. He visited Strasburg, famous for its great Cathedral which was begun in the 13th century and has not yet been completed. From there he went on to Munich in Bavaria, and attended the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau. At Bonn, Beethoven's birthplace, on the left bank of the Rhine, he called on his friend, and colleague in astronomical

researches, Professor Hermann Jacobi, and had the pleasure of being his guest and witnessing under his roof the celebration of the veteran Professor's golden jubilee of doctorate. With him he visited the historical places of the town among which are the Catholic archiepiscopal theological college built in 1892 and beautifully situated on an eminence overlooking the river, and the Bonn University known for its ancient learning, its 284 instructors and very nearly 4000 students; for its rich library containing more than 350,000 volumes and its building by far the finest in the town. As a souvenir of this visit he later sent to Jacobi a copy of a rare and valuable book, "The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago" which had formed the subject of their conversations and which Jacobi had expressed a desire to peruse.

In France, Swamikannu Pillai had many friends who were anxious to see him. He also wished to execute a long cherished plan of a trip to Farigouls, a village in the Department of Haute Loire, and the birthplace of his dear old master, Father Jean. The journey took him first to Le Puy which, with its ancient cathedral and colossal statue of our Lady, more than 70 feet high, is much frequented by tourists and pilgrims. Here a little incident occurred worth mentioning as an illustration of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's prodigious memory. When climbing up to the cathedral he asked his guide where the old inscription on the stairs leading to the Cathedral was. There are many inscriptions in or about the old edifice, and on the immense flight of 140 steps right up to the porch. "What inscription?" asked the guide somewhat puzzled. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai without a moment's hesitation replied:

"Ni caveas crimen
Caveas contingere limen:
Nam Regina Poli
Vult sine sorde coli."[1]

and added: "I heard it some forty years ago when I was a student of Fr. Jean who gave it to me as an example of the Latin of the Middle Ages." The inscription was easily found, but we may imagine the amazement of the gentleman of Le Puy at finding an Indian who knew more than himself about the inscriptions of his Cathedral. After his pilgrimage to Fr. Jean's own house and praying in the church of his baptism Mr. Swamikannu Pillai visited Paris where he called on the celebrated astronomer Camille Flammarion, President of the French Astronomical Society, who received him kindly. Indeed, wherever he went in Europe Mr. Swamikannu met with the kindest reception; left an imperishable memory, and won the hearts of all who had the privilege of listening to his conversation.

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After his return to India he continued for two more years to work as Secretary of the Legislative Council. Meanwhile in appreciation of his numerous services he was once again honoured by the Government who were pleased, in 1924, to add to his other titles that of the C. I. E. When Sir P. Rajagopalachari, on his becoming member of the India Council, had to resign the President-

[1] If you do not fear sin,
Fear to approach this threshold:
For the Queen of the world wishes
To be honoured by pure hearts.

ship, our Rao Bahadur was nominated by His Excellency the Governor to succeed him. No better person could have been chosen, for he truly possessed all the qualities of head and heart needed in this exalted and responsible office. It is true that the choice was at first anything but popular with a section of the representatives of the people, but even they in the end had to confess that his tact, his gentle and affable manners soon won him the good will of the House. With the people at large and, we doubt not, with the majority of the members of the Council, the nomination of Swamikannu Pillai met from the very outset with a large measure of approbation as is amply testified by the compliments paid to him both in the press and in the Council. When on February 5, 1924 he took the prescribed oath of allegiance to the Crown and ascended the Presidential Chair amidst applause, the Leader of the House, the Hon'ble Sir Charles Todhunter in welcoming him to the new office said: "I believe that I shall have the whole House with me when I say that out of the gentlemen available to fill this place no better choice could possibly have been made by His Excellency the Governor. You have already shown us that you possess many of the needed qualities—courage, industry, patience, sympathy and humour. You have ever been ready to help, and more ready to listen than to speak, and you have preserved an attitude of complete detachment from party politics." "A better choice," said the Chief Minister, the late Raja of Panagal, "is impossible to think of."

In February 1925 the statutory four years, during which the Legislative Council was to have a nominated President, came to an end and for the first time its members were called upon to elect a President from among

themselves. By a large majority of votes the election fell on Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai who once more sat in the President's Chair, this time not by the decision of Government but by the free choice of his colleagues—a fact more eloquent than all a biographer's enthusiasm to show the esteem in which he was held by those who worked with and under him. The words of Sir Arthur Knapp on this occasion reflect the opinion of the whole House. "My personal testimony," he said, "to the tact, good will, patience and ability which you have displayed in the conduct of the proceedings of this House, must be quite superfluous and of very little value in view of the fact that the House itself with no uncertain voice has now declared that it finds in you those virtues and those qualities which amply qualify you to perform the duties of the President and which entitled you to its most complete confidence." These were consoling words, and it were an easy task to fill pages of such and similar utterances did we intend to give a record of the events and speeches of that day instead of aiming, according to our plan, at recapturing the likeness of a great man that is no more.

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From the time of his return from England, and more especially from the beginning of 1925, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai felt he was no longer the same man; he frequently told his friends that he had no relish for food, no taste for anything, and that he had to make an effort to work and study. His indomitable will, however, overcame this disgust and unusual lassitude, and he continued to preside

at the meetings of the Council and to work, almost feverishly at his astronomical researches. Just when he needed most rest, he had been once more placed by circumstances on a seat wherein all his powers were taxed to the uttermost.

The Legislative Council was passing through a period of uncommon unrest fanned by the efforts of the Opposition to bring about the overthrow of the party in power. It was a trying time for Swamikannu Pillai who, we should bear in mind, was a sincere patriot but withal an upright, fair and conscientious man. He often had to adjudge on thorny problems and on legal subtleties brought forward by some of the keenest politicians in the Presidency. His rulings at this time covered a wide range of subjects like procedure in debate, admissibility of amendments, demand for supplementary grants, the hour to be allocated to official and non-official business, the convention to be observed in demanding a poll, the admissibility of motions which are not recommendations to Government. On these and similar technical points Mr. Swamikannu Pillai never failed to display a legal acumen not unworthy of the highest traditions of the bar and the strictest impartiality. After his death many members of the Council gave testimony to these characteristic qualities of his genius, "As a President," said Mr. L. C. Guruswami, "he filled the Chair with dignity, and no one had anything to complain of against him in regard to the impartiality of his rulings on the points of order raised, which have often been too many in this Council." We add to this the verdict of Mr. S. Satyamurthi in those days "l'enfant terrible" of the House and the member, who had the largest number of "points of order" to his credit. At the Sheriff's meeting he said: "The

secret of his popularity in the Council lay in the fact that he took scrupulous care to be fair in his rulings."

Such was the universal opinion of the first elected President, who remained in office to the moment of his death which overtook him on the 10th of September, 1925, after a comparatively short illness of two weeks. The story of his last days and of his holy end belong to another chapter of this book. "I am sure," said the Hon'ble Mr. T. E. Moir on that memorable occasion, "we shall all remember the man—one who made no enemy, one to whom any unkindness of thought or deed could not be charged, a man who deservedly won and kept the regard and affection of all who knew him, a man of that unassuming demeanour which always accompanies perfect and profound scholarship."

On the 7th October, 1925 the Council met for the first time after his death and passed the following "Resolution of Condolence," moved by the Leader of the House, the Hon'ble Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, seconded by the Hon'ble the Raja of Panagal, the Chief Minister, and many other members of the Council: "That this House do place on record their sense of the great loss sustained by the Government and the country by the demise of the Hon'ble Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai and convey their sincere sympathy with the members of the bereaved family."

The Deputy President next read the letters he had received from Mr. J. H. Whitley, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Sir P. Rajagopalachari, Member of the India Council and the first President of the Reformed Madras Council expressing their feelings of sorrow on the death of the late President Diwan Bahadur L. D, Swamikannu Pillai.

SPEAKER,
House of Commons,
5th October 1925.

"DEAR DIWAN BAHADUR SAIB,

It is with great grief that I have learnt of the death of my colleague the very distinguished President of the Madras Council.

I count it amongst the greatest privileges of my office as Speaker to have come to know him and to count him as a friend and colleague.

His fine character and his wonderful mind were open-unconscious gifts to those who were so fortunate as to meet him.

To you all, and particularly to his widow, Mrs. Whitley and I send our deepest sympathy.

Yours very truly,
J. H. WHITLEY,
Speaker."

INDIA OFFICE,
7—10—'25.

"MY DEAR KESAVA PILLAI,

You can have no idea how much I feel Mr. Swamikannu's death. He was such a lovable man in every way; and your appreciation (many thanks for sending a copy of it to me) is so accurate and nice; it touched me to read it. You, he and I were a trio in conducting the Council and now he has left us, and our turn cannot, I suppose, be far off.

With all good wishes,

I am,
Your old friend,
P. RAJAGOPALACHARI."

CHAPTER VIII

A MODEL CATHOLIC LAYMAN

Perhaps, for some of my readers the life of Swamikannu Pillai will have ended with the events narrated in the last chapter. To such, indeed, the hero of these pages was no more than an obscure, though gifted son of India who, by dint of work and perseverance, succeeded to outshine his fellows, to climb step by step above them all till he rose to be and to die a President of the Legislative Council. Those, however, who knew him outside the limelight of Fort St. George and away from the din and dust of the public press, must realize that so far we have presented but one aspect of the picture. The true portrait should be a reproduction of the whole man as he was in his official as well as in his private career. To neglect the latter were to leave out certain characteristic features but for which the present biography would never have been put together. No doubt he was one of the most distinguished Government officers of modern times, a scholar, a linguist, a pioneer in science; but to these gifts, great as they were, he added another as the crown and copingstone of the whole. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was, above all, a model Catholic Layman. Religion was the very life and

breath of his being. Much as he loved letters, science and art, the beauties of nature and the charm of his children, yet all these pleasures were secondary. This constitutes, for some at least of my readers, the highest merit of his life. The more so, if we bear in mind, that it is quite possible to be a great scholar, poet, politician, military leader and the like, but to be miserably small when measured by the standard of Christian morality.

Born of Catholic parents, educated in a Catholic College, Swamikannu Pillai remained to the end a fervent Catholic in mind and heart. Nearly every speaker at his graveside as well as the many admirers, who have since written about him, adverted to the sweet religious perfume of his life. Nay, if in any way some have failed to be true to his likeness, it is because they did not sufficiently stress the superiority of the spiritual element in the make-up of his character. The Catholic Faith, traditional and medieval, untainted by the pride of intellectualism and the pleasure-seeking propensities of our age was deeply rooted in the very essence of his being. It imparted a supernatural value to his actions, which he was mindful to perform not for the sake of worldly profit, or worldly admiration, but from the standpoint of the higher ideals set before him by the Catholic religion.

Speaking of the Manners and Customs of Hindus, the Abbé Dubois observes that among them "nothing is left to chance; everything is laid down by rule, and the foundation of all their customs is purely and simply religious. It is for this reason that the Hindus hold all their customs and usages to be inviolable, for, being essentially religious, they consider them as sacred as

religion itself!"[1] This attitude of the orthodox Hindu believer differs widely from that of the Christian Saint. The latter does not attribute so easily a divine origin to the manners and customs of the society in which he lives. Side by side with the truths of revelation he admits in human society much that is good or indifferent, though not directly emanating from God, and much that is wholly evil and ungodly. Divorce, adultery, birth-control (which, as G. K. Chesterton puts it, is neither birth nor control), companionate experiments, abortion and euthanasia are sins that the custom of centuries cannot bleach nor justify. Apart from these the Saint knows he can inform all his actions, naturally good or indifferent, with a spiritual motive, thus sanctifying word, thought and deed of his short-lived pilgrimage on earth. And this, it appears to the writer, was indeed the outstanding feature or what psychologists would call the 'mental set' of Swamikannu Pillai's life; a kind of soul-disposition towards the supernatural which ennobled the trivialities of our little lives nowadays magnified out of all proportion by the materialism of the times. It imparted a religious atmosphere to all his undertakings. In 1924, he writes to a friend: "....I have placed in the same packet for you, in case you have not seen them already, my pamphlets on astrology which more or less form the subject of my present University Lectures. Even in my academic lectures I do not feel inclined, in my old age, to dwell on anything else than what may tend to promote the glory of God and of our Holy Church."

1 Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies—J. A. Dubois, Chap. II, p. 310.

It has been stated elsewhere that Mr. Swamikannu Pillai's library was by no means too big. True, it did not contain a large number of volumes but those which it did contain were select, carefully picked up from a high utilitarian standpoint. An exception, moreover, must be made in favour of spiritual literature of which he had more than is usually found on the shelves of even the best Catholic layman. Among the vast number of authors on religious subjects he had a partiality for French writers many of whose works he used to procure through the Fathers of St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, or borrow from their well-stocked library. It is mostly from the Diary that we come to know how fond he was of spiritual reading and how he had made it a point to devote some time to it every day. "At night from 9 to 10," he writes on one occasion, "read Isaiah, Chaps. XLVIII—LV from the Douay Bible." Many a late hour was similarly spent over the Gospels, or over the Psalms, for which he had a predilection and which he could read in the Hebrew text or in Greek. The life of our Lord was often found on his desk and once after completing the well-known 'Life of Christ' by Fr. H. Didon, O. P., he tells us: "Its reading has been a blessing and a source of consolation to me, 'qui in tenebris et in umbra mortis sedebam.'" On another occasion he makes a curious and very quaint remark. He had just gone over the life of St. Aloysius Gonzaga and had been deeply impressed with it, in particular with the young Saint's extraordinary love for purity, and he comments in French: "On dit que les moeurs Europeennes sont plus libres que les nôtres mais les moeurs Catholiques sont partout les mêmes."[1]

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1 They say that the ways and customs of the Europeans are more free than our own, but Catholic customs are the same all over the world.

He reveals this sense of deep religiosity in his actions, in his correspondence, even in his printed works whenever the subject matter does not prevent him from doing so. The little book containing the translation into English verse of the 'Prayer of St. Bernard to Jesus Crucified' ends with touching words in which Swamikannu Pillai begs his readers to pray for him saying: "Crucified Jesus, have mercy on the translator." To his life-long friend, Mr. A. Prabalanatha Pillai who had distributed copies of St. Bernard's Prayer at his own cost he writes: "I was ashamed when I heard from you that you had ordered 48 copies for free distribution and that you had all the corrections carried out in manuscript before distribution. This prompted me to spend some money—it is not more than one sovereign (with a small s) for our Sovereign (with a large S) and Lord." He was very fond of this Hymn, recommended it to friends and often meditated on it, encouraging himself with the words of the author of the Imitation of Christ: "Si nescis alta speculari et coelestia, requiesce in passione Christi: et in sacris vulneribus eius libenter habita.[1] "To-day," he says in another place, "I heard Mass and received Holy Communion with special devotion. God granted me abundance of tears and I promised to make tomorrow a general confession of my sins. I shall not go out with my gun to-day for I must spend the time in prayer and thanksgiving."

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It has been truly said that piety is the hall-mark of

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[1] If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest on the Passion of Christ, and willingly dwell in his Sacred Wounds.—Imit. of Christ, Bk. II, Chap. I.

Catholicity. It is in fact the practical aspect of religion, a truthful attitude which creatures assume in respect of their Creator; a disposition of the soul often gathered up particular actions and concentrated in special rituals. It centres around the altar and finds pleasure in the fulfilment of all the practices by which intelligent beings express their adoration or worship of the Deity. The elaborate and majestic ritual of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church on the one hand and, on the other, the stupendous wealth of well-regulated devotions towards God and His Saints are intended to express our piety; that is the concrete aspect of the virtue of religion. Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was deeply and sincerely pious.

Some perhaps will be tempted to smile when they will read or hear that this great man was wont to keep a lamp burning day and night before the images of Saints, and to join in a procession in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We do not wish to take up a controversial tone but do feel, at times, the blood warming up at the irreverent attitude which such people, who ought to know, assume in matters concerning the religious practices of the Catholic Church. To be sure, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai felt quite at ease in a procession with the badge of a sodalist and a lighted taper in his hand; more at ease, maybe, than when he had to attend official ceremonies in presidential robes, or a University Convocation amidst Fellows and Senators in antiquated costumes. For consistency's sake, if for no other reason, we shall admire him no less as he kisses a Bishop's ring than when he bows conventionally to the majesty of a Governor. The late Duke of Norfolk, whom Swamikannu Pillai resembled much in the piety of his life, used to lament a lack of logic in the mentality of many

of his countrymen towards the respective ceremonial observances of Church and Court.

Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was a sodalist from his early youth and kept up, through life, the practice of reciting the Office of the Blessed Virgin and preparing for all the feasts celebrated in her honour. He cherished a fondness, a kind of instinctive love for the name 'Mary' which he gave to many of his daughters at baptism. Another little trait of this affection for our Blessed Lady, a touch of loving delicacy, showed itself in the style of many of his letters. Even as President of the Legislative Council, in writing to friends who had been his co-sodalists from College days, he was fond to address each of them as: "Dear Brother Sodalist." Being a member of the Apostleship of Prayer he faithfully followed the First Friday devotions. He communicated weekly, but when Pius X, by a decree of the 20th December 1905, recommended to the faithful the practice of frequent and daily communion, he quietly fell in with the innovation and urged it on his children. He had a reverent love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and tender sympathy for His Passion. On the occasion of the First Communion of one of his grandchildren he wrote to a relative: "After many futile attempts to write to you a longer letter, I have come down to a post card .... It was a surprise to me no less than to you that X should have received Our Lord for the first time in strict privacy; but that is how we should receive Him always, is it not? He is a jealous God and He does not want even new clothes to distract the dear little soul whom He condescends to visit for the first time..."

Among the Saints, St. Anthony of Padua seems to have

been his special Patron to whom he had frequent recourse in the trials and afflictions inseparable from mortal life, and he likewise insisted that his children should pray to him for favours or for protection. When he was nominated President of the Legislative Council in preference to Diwan Bahadur Sir T. Desikachari, whose name had already been mentioned in the press as the most probable candidate, he sent Rs. 100, in token of gratitude, to a shrine of St. Anthony for charities remarking there was no sum he had more thankfully paid in his life than this debt due to the Saint. Night prayers were sacred in his family, and they had to be recited in time, and under no condition to be omitted. Similarly Grace before and after meals was ever to be said aloud, even when non-Catholic and Hindu friends were present, so much so, says his daughter in a letter to which we shall refer hereafter, that when some Hindu friends invited the children to their table, they would expect them to say Grace before meals. In short, he practised all the devotions he had learnt at school and promptly added others as they came to be adopted in the Church.

Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai ever showed the greatest regard for ecclesiastical authority and for all the members of the Priesthood of the Catholic Church. To honour them he considered a duty in the performance of which distinctions of country and race were as utterly irrelevant as social privileges or intellectual gifts. He looked upon them as ministers of Christ who, by the promptings of special vocation to which in his youth he had been forcibly drawn, had chosen to continue His work of Redemption on earth. His valuable services were ever at their disposal, more especially, in such matters as the drafting of petitions and of appeals to Government, the

organizing of the activities of Catholic laymen and presiding at their meetings. It was noticed that in his journeys through the country he would often go out of his way to call upon the parish priest of the village through which he happened to pass, and would consent to be a guest in his house, though better accommodation had been prepared for him by richer friends. To put it briefly, he was well-known in his Community as the friend of Bishops and of Priests.

We should not forget to mention, at least in passing, Swamikannu Pillai's remarkable charity. The poor were always welcome at 'Rose Ville' in Royapuram, and he would deprive himself not of luxuries only but almost of the bare necessaries that he might have more to give. His fatherly heart went out, above all, to the orphan and widow. On certain festivals of the year he used to gather a large number of beggars and destitutes whom he and his family would generously feed. This pious custom, once very common in many parts of India, they had learned from the late Mr. M. Pais, a prominent merchant of Mangalore, whose princely donations to the needy—the writer remembers to have once seen a thousand of them provided with food and raiment—assumed at times the munificence and liberality of an Indian potentate.

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But what will appeal most to the student of Swamikannu Pillai's religious life is the unmistakable prayerful attitude which pervades it. It were either a platitude

or mere repetition to make good this statement by adding that he never omitted his morning and night prayers, that he recited the Rosary with his children and went to Mass daily. We mean more. To us it seems that Swamikannu Pillai was at least aiming to dwell habitually, like the Saints, in an atmosphere of worshipful adoration. Ascetics call it "interior life," a condition of the soul by which the spiritual man, raised to a higher plane and no longer drawn hither and thither by the disturbing influences of the realities which surround it, is ever ready to enter into communion with God. That in a measure he had attained to such a degree of holiness during the last years of his life is attested by those who had the direction of his soul and can be inferred from the many pious sayings scattered through the pages of his Diary such as the following: "I promise to make my meditation daily;" "Jesus, teach me to pray;" "I spent a long time in the sweet consolation of the Holy Spirit during my thanksgiving after Communion." In an article which he wrote for the 'Morning Star' of Trichinopoly he thus speaks of Catholic greatness:

"Catholic greatness is not greatness in the sense of the world: it is not seizing the first place at a banquet by force, fraud or entreaty, it is the avoidance of places and prizes, the acceptance of a great position under the sole sense of duty, and its accomplishment in all humility and self-sacrifice." This is the language of Saints which no one can think and write unless he be a man of prayer.

As the end drew near his religious fervour seemed to grow proportionately in intensity, and his heart to be even more firmly set on God and on the things of heaven. His nature was becoming secretly yet visibly supernaturalized.

This manifested itself in a more assiduous and scrupulous performance of his daily devotions, and in an almost complete detachment from wordly cares, which did not escape the notice of those of his household. The dogmas and practices of the Church sank with deeper significance into his soul, and he began to realize them more fully not only as the truest reality but also as the only reality worth our trouble. God's ways were passing into his. In this atmosphere of heavenly ideals his whole being appeared to gather strength and to expand beyond the petty narrowness of self, beyond the confines of home into the wider designs of God's love in the creation of mankind. That he grew in saintliness was the general remark of those who moved more intimately in his circle. Such also was the feeling of many Catholics who, on the day of his death, had gathered by the side of his lifeless remains. They were heard to speak, in subdued tones, of the rare virtues of the deceased, and to emphasize that he had been a model Catholic throughout life, and that his religious enthusiasm and fervour became more intensified as he drew nearer to the close of his career on earth. We shall close with a short passage from among the papers of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai. In it he draws an epitome of the ideal of Christian life or, if you like, an abstract of the Sermon of the Mount which he had set to himself as the guide and standard of his conduct.

"The man who loves Jesus Christ perfectly is a man devoid alike of self-love, of guile and of ambition. To himself he is always severe, making no excuses for his shortcomings, but he is very gentle to others, and forgives them everything. He is honest without affectation, gentle but not cowardly; ready to oblige others with no

thought of self-interest; very exact but free from scrupulosity; constantly united with God without making anxious efforts; never idle, yet never overwhelmed with business; never in a great hurry, and still less distracted by his occupations, because he keeps his heart free from them, and allows it to be engaged only in the one great matter of his salvation. He thinks little of himself, but esteems others highly, because in them he considers only their virtues, whereas he looks at himself solely in order to detect his faults."

CHAPTER IX

CATHOLIC ACTION

It is truly remarkable that apart from the common infirmities of human nature no fault of any consequence has been imputed to the character of Swamikannu Pillai. Yet one aspect of his life is usually singled out for keen criticism by his co-religionists. He has been accused of aloofness from the interests of his Community or, to say the least, of not using to their fullest advantage all the influence that went with his high office. Even during his life-time the shafts, private and public, aimed at him on this score were many and often hard to bear, more especially so by one, as he was, of super-sensitive nature. But, let it be remembered to his honour, they never drew from his lips an unguarded or angry retort. Some readers may even be disposed to consider these accusations so obviously unjust as to deserve to be wholly disregarded if not treated with contempt. On the other hand the criticism has been raised by many, by friends and admirers more than by foes: it has accompanied him through life and even now his name is but grudgingly associated with the vast body of activities which go by the name of Catholic Action.

A militant Catholic Swamikannu Pillai was certainly not: but then he was by temperament of an even, calm and kindly disposition. In this connection we will do well to bear in mind that candidates for favours, from whom much of the criticism has been raised, are apt to look for too much from their prospective benefactors and to complain bitterly when the support they receive does not come up to their expectations. There lurks a tendency in the nooks and corners of the human heart to conceal the fruits of patronage, while, on the other hand, unsuccessful suing is loudly advertised. It were an easy task to cull from Swamikannu Pillai's private correspondence a long list of names of persons who owe their position to his exertions, and a longer list of those who, at one time or another, have been indebted to him for unexpected promotion. The same letters show that if he occasionally failed to obtain favours for his clients, it was certainly not due to lack of sympathy or want of pleading on their behalf. To one of them he writes: "You must have begun to realize—what I have found long ago—that my position carries no real influence. However I have not given up my endeavour on behalf of Z." Be this matter as it may, there cannot be two opinions on the fact that, in his own way, he was a most active Catholic. The mode of this activity was perhaps the secret of his success as well as the source of the criticism that has been levelled against him. For one thing it was never boisterous; never on the showy side of any enterprise. Let us attempt to study it more in detail.

Catholic India will long remember the First Marian Congress held in Madras in January 1921. There lies before us the large volume of the Proceedings wherein are

contained the particulars of all the doings and the sayings of those memorable days. Strange enough the name of Swamikannu Pillai does not appear in any of the various Committees appointed to organize the celebrations, nor does he come in as one of the deputed speakers or movers of resolutions. In fact, as far as we were able to verify, his name is not to be seen anywhere in the three hundred double column pages of printed matter, the Record of the Congress. It is true that an embargo prevents Government servants from taking a leading part in any movement extraneous to the sphere of their official duties. Yet it was not impossible for Swamikannu Pillai, had he wished it, to make himself prominent in a variety of ways quite compatible with his position. When the Congress came to an end and the services of many a deserving worker were publicly recognized, Swamikannu Pillai was not among those singled out for special praise, nor for any of the honours that were bestowed on a number of ecclesiastics and laymen. But he had not kept aloof from the Congress. We know that he was in constant touch with its organizers, that his time and advice were at the beck of the ecclesiastical authorities and that, in his own unobtrusive way, he did throw himself, heart and soul, into the Congress. It would not surprise us to hear that some at least of the speeches and resolutions had been got up with the assistance and under the supervision of Swamikannu Pillai, and we positively know that one of the leading addresses had been written entirely by him. That was his peculiar mode of contributing to Catholic Action.

His beautiful rendering from the French of "Le Catholique D'Action" has been already referred to. Out

of humility, we suppose, he published it anonymously From a passage of the preface which he wrote for the book the reader will grasp how Swamikannu Pillai understood and tried to realize in himself the ideal of a Catholic in Action. We may or may not wholly agree with every detail of the description, but it certainly portrays the man of action as conceived by Swamikannu Pillai.

"Catholic Action does not mean spending the whole day out of doors, busying oneself incessantly with hand and (especially) with tongue. It does not mean wasting one's breath in summoning people to combine without ever telling them upon what and how they should combine. It does not mean taking a lofty stand in apologetics, in biblical interpretation, in literature, in politics and in sociology. The Catholic in action disowns all agitation of this sort. He insists on profound, prudent and supernatural action.

"He does not love trifling with apostleship any more than with other matters. Before going to work upon society, he works upon himself, being convinced that his own individual conversion is the best thing he can do to bring about general improvement. He trusts to books as much as to action : he retires often within his chamber and above all within himself. According to him, one hour of reflection saves, it may be, a month's work, and victory over oneself is often the condition of succeeding with others. He does not always talk : he thinks. He is known by what he says, and more particularly by what he is careful

not to say. He believes that apostleship has its tactics, that to expend one's energy is not everything, but that it is necessary to expend it at the right moment and in the right place.

"He is for the press; but for one thing he is more anxious to make it an intelligent and dignified press, worthy of the Catholic Faith, than to scatter broadcast papers of all kinds. He wishes that Catholics should vote, but not in hordes, even in a good cause. He does not belong *a priori* either to the majority or to the opposition. He wishes to deliberate and to choose. He does not long for triumph, heedless of means; he condemns discreditable methods, because his cause is that of the spirit against the flesh. He is not for processes which are barred by age, because they would now be in bad form, and moreover, his cause is that of intelligence against folly.

"He is not a visionary. He is not a fanatic upon anything whatsoever, neither upon the past nor upon the present nor upon the future. The past being an experience, he tries to learn the lessons which it has to teach. He likes history, and he holds that tradition has its rules. But the past, however perfect it may have been, has had its blots, sometimes horrible ones. At any rate, it has this defect that it has passed and that regrets will not serve to bring it back to life.

"As to the present, however bad it may be,—and who will believe it to be such who had studied history?—it has at least this point in its favour, that

it exists and that it alone is capable of being utilized. It is for us to adjust it, to examine at leisure its resources and drawbacks and to correct the latter by the former. In the present, too, everything is not of the same importance. There are aspects of the present age, which are mere noise and there are others which have a future before them. That which has a future is the one thing which he endeavours to sift from the rest and to possess himself of. For the Catholic of action trusts in the future but not too much. He looks with suspicion upon prophets of the city of the future, knowing that progress is slow and painful and that humanity is devoted to mediocrity. He is content with incomplete results and with having, not indeed replanted the terrestrial paradise, but with having at least helped the higher classes to ascend a step higher and the masses not to fall too low with affliction and sin. Did he not succeed even in this, he would have achieved at least this result that he had rendered testimony to Jesus Christ. That is enough. An austere satisfaction; but the Catholic of action, above all, lives his faith. This man of action feeds on prayer, on contemplation. Jesus Christ is his 'Great Love.' The root of his energy is this love."

The principles advocated above are not only excellent in themselves but afford a clue to a deeper understanding of the special limitations of Swamikannu Pillai's social activities as a Catholic. No one, who has made a study of his life and work, will deny that within these limitations of temperament and, may be, of personal view-point, he

devoted to the amelioration of his community a very large part of his time and work. Instances of such zeal and readiness to co-operate with any good Catholic enterprise are not wanting. When in 1889 the late Fr. F. Heraudeau started the Catholic Former Pupils' Association of St. Joseph's College, Swamikannu Pillai was prompt in joining it, and was one of the most assiduous in attending its meetings and retreats, year after year, until more urgent duties and responsibilities at times detained him elsewhere when the annual gatherings were held. But if he could not attend the public retreat of the Association, he would come at some other time and go through the course of the Spiritual Exercises alone in the College. For nearly twenty years he willingly consented to write the account of the proceedings of the Easter meetings of the Association and, it is said, that on more than one occasion, when all the functions were over, he sat till 1 a. m. writing for the press the report of the day's happenings while others were enjoying the spectacle of a drama and concert in honour of the Former Pupils.

Towards the end of 1919 the Secretary of State for India visited the Madras Presidency in connexion with the proposed Reforms. A programme of public receptions and personal interviews was arranged by Government to afford opportunities to His Excellency the Viceroy and to the Secretary for enquiring into the views of leaders of the various communities of this Province. Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai was informed that a personal interview with him was included in the programme and that it would take place from 3.30 to 4 p. m. on Tuesday the 18th December at Government House. He put himself at once in communication with the Right Rev. A. Faisandier, S. J.,

Bishop of Trichinopoly, with other Bishops and prominent Catholics and with His Grace the Archbishop of Madras. To the latter he wrote: "....I am sure Your Grace will before that time have seen the High Personages named above probably more than once. If nevertheless there is any matter which Your Grace would like me to mention to the Authorities, I shall be glad to note the same for my guidance." Swamikannu Pillai was at the time Collector of Nellore and could not in that capacity be a member of the deputation, which, on behalf of the Catholic Indian Association, presented an address to the Secretary of State. We may be sure, however, that he did not fail to represent to the authorities concerned, perhaps in a more efficient manner, the views and opinions communicated to him by the Bishops.

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The Catholic Indian Association of Southern India owes a debt of gratitude to Swamikannu Pillai. It must not be forgotten that it was our Diwan Bahadur together with such men as R. M. Pragasa Mudaliar, M. B. Susai Pillai, A. B. Gnanusamy Nayudu, Dr. Fahrer, Fr. Sewell who laid the foundations of the C. I. A. Its inaugural meeting took place on the 31st of May, 1899 amidst the enthusiasm of Catholics of Southern India and with the cordial blessing of the Hierarchy. The incident, which, apart from the generally expressed desire for such an organization, gave birth to the Association, was the agitation carried on by Catholics as well as by Protestants for the repeal of compulsory death-duties. Their efforts were completely successful; they not only brought immediate relief to Indian Christians

but served to instil into the mind of Catholic Indians the enormous advantage of having a communal association of the kind, such as the Protestants already had under the name of the Indian Christian Association. The Right Rev. Dr. Theophilus Mayer, auxiliary Bishop of Madras, was the first President, and Swamikannu Pillai the first Secretary of the Association and continued in office up to the year 1918. But for him the C. I. A. would hardly have survived the second or third year of its existence. Only those who have had experience of presiding over such meetings of our community are in a position to gauge the amount of patience and forbearance that is required to meet the differences of conflicting interests, to disarm opposition and withal to secure the respect of the contending parties. At a later stage he had to put up with noisy agitations or disturbances of an ultra democratic kind.

Even after his resignation of the Secretaryship which had become incompatible with his increasing responsibilities, he continued to be the life and directing force of the Association. In 1925, the year of its Silver Jubilee and the last of Swamikannu's life we find him busy writing an historical account and retrospect of the C. I. A. It is an interesting document written by a man who is not accustomed to be satisfied with a bare summary of past events but who looks back with a critical eye on the quarter of a century during which the Association has eked out its "by no means peaceful existence;" points out the causes of past failure, suggests broader views and a wider outlook and appeals to the community for greater sympathy and co-operation. "The Catholic Indian Association," he says at the end of the Report, "neglected as it is, is the

one organ of Catholic Indian public opinion in the Presidency; and the appeal may therefore be legitimately made to all Catholic Indians to stand by the Association and see that it becomes more and more strong and representative. To draw up an imaginary test of benefits which each and every Association should confer on its members and to profess discontent because the C. I. A. does not shower those benefits on each and every member, is not the way to improve the representative character of the Association. The Catholic Indians as a community, in many respects, are backward, but let them not also earn the reproach of being a community that cannot even speak out for itself when all other communities are so vociferous."

In fact, in all the affairs of the Catholic Community Swamikannu Pillai was the recognized leader without whom no Catholic movement of some magnitude could be organized, no scheme for the betterment of the people could be designed or carried out. In a well-known passage which deserves quotation, Mr. M. Ruthnaswamy says:

> "In the eyes of Government and the public all these years the Catholic Community meant Mr. Swamikannu Pillai and Mr. Swamikannu Pillai meant the Catholic Community. If Government wanted to know the views of the Catholic Community on any matter it was Mr. Swamikannu Pillai they approached. If Bishops or priests wanted to address Government on any matter affecting the relations between Government and the Church, it was through Mr. Swamikannu Pillai that they did it. There was not a matter in which Indian Christian interests were affected,

from the amendment to the Succession Act of twenty years ago down to the Reform Act of the other day which gave us communal representation in which Mr. Swamikannu Pillai did not play a dominant part. No Catholic movement, no Catholic committee, no Catholic meeting, could be assured of success or prestige without him. And few were the general Indian Christian movements in which our Protestant brethren did not seek his principal advocacy. To the Catholic Indian laity he was a tower of strength. Hundreds of young Catholics owe their admission into Government service to him. Innumerable petitions on behalf of poor ryots asking for the grants of land or for the safe-guarding of their existing rights, or in behalf of priests in defence of the interests of the Church, have been drafted by him, as he alone with his great Secretariat experience knew how to draft them. Every new reward of office or honour that came to him meant an accession of new strength to his community. Although on account of his official position till very recently he could not speak much on behalf of his community in public, yet by sage counsel and wise guidance, and by means of his sweet reasonableness in the Council Chambers of Government, he was able to serve his community nobly and efficiently. He was in very deed the leader of the Catholic community of Southern India till the moment of his death."

To the critics of Swamikannu Pillai no better eulogy can be opposed than these words of Mr. Ruthnaswamy.

We would moreover invite them to point out any other Catholic layman whose services to the community can even distantly be compared with the services of Swamikannu Pillai. Many a year must pass before such a one shall rise again in our midst.

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Organized Catholic Action is a form of activity, more than any other, full of pitfalls and fraught with difficulties. Nothing short of heroism is demanded of its leaders for no Catholic Association with a social or civic programme, can exist independent of the ecclesiastical authority. It must work under ecclesiastical guidance and direction. The history, more or less calamitous, of many Catholic Associations throughout the world bears out our statement; it shows too what a high standard of virtue must be found in the leader of a cause for which the main asset is obedience and submission. Few nowadays can appreciate Newman when he talks of 'the real pleasure of submitting.' And such indeed is the heroism expected of our Catholic leaders for there are occasions in the career of a man of superior mental gifts and high social position when he must find obedience to the accepted views and opinions of authority very hard to the spirit. Perhaps Mr. Swamikannu Pillai never appeared greater in the eyes of those, who can see, as when such an occasion came in his way in 1917 after the Bishops' Conference at Bangalore. In it some disciplinary measures were discussed and adopted by the Bishops of the Presidency with a view to introduce more uniformity in the attitude of Catholic laymen towards the social and political problems of the

day, especially those affecting the inter-relations of Catholics with Indians of other religions and, more particularly, with Indian Christians. The Conference and the resolutions passed thereat by the Bishops were viewed with disfavour by a section of the Community. An agitation was set afoot to oppose the action of the Bishops. An anonymous vilification of the decisions of the ecclesiastical authority was published in the columns of the "Hindu," and mass-meetings, savouring of rebellion or insubordination, were held by Indian Catholics at Pachaiyappa's Hall, Madras, on March 24, 1917, and at Tanjore on May 19 of the same year. The discussions of these meetings, unfortunately attended by a large number of Catholics, and the resolutions moved and carried at the same, were the passing phases of a movement within the community over which we shall willingly draw a veil. For some time and in perfect good faith Mr. Swamikannu Pillai adhered to the party of opposition, but on recognizing his mistake, he withdrew from it and published a pamphlet "The Agitation anent the Bishops' Conference," condemning the agitation and undoing the evil his cooperation might have caused.

It is well known that one of the points of the Bangalore Conference to which Mr. Swamikannu Pillai took exception and on which he felt very strongly was the prohibition by the Bishops of a common Association of Catholics with Protestants even in purely social and political matters. Swamikannu Pillai had for many years advocated such an alliance chiefly in connection with the election of representatives to the Legislative Council. He had published an appeal to their Lordships the Bishops

of this Province and to all leading Indian Christians recommending the fusion, for political purposes, of both Catholics and Protestants as a first condition for their claiming a separate electorate and representation in the Local Legislative Council through election. To him it was but too clear that our independent right to reserved seats would not easily be recognized by Government and that, even if recognized, our community was neither sufficiently strong nor organized to exercise any useful influence in the deliberations of the Council. But more than this he held that in other questions too of a social kind, Catholics stood to gain by making common cause with the Protestants and casting their lot into one single Association o Indian Christians. He became somewhat vociferous on this point at the time of the All India Christian Conference which was held at Allahabad in 1915, and again at Madras on the 26, 27, 28, 29 December 1916, and expressed his views, far too forcibly, in a letter to a friend, wherein he said:

> "I think it is time that something should be done to get elementary rights and privileges for the Indian Christian Community. We do not tarnish ourselves by enjoying the same privileges as Protestants, or by asking for the same privileges, or by asking for them in the same memorial or meeting. Supposing such joint action were forbidden in Europe, it would still be necessay in India on account of our peculiar circumstances, but such joint action is not forbidden in Europe and I do not see why we should be kept back in the political arena and also keep back the Protestants because of a restriction imposed neither

by the law of God nor by the law of man. I wish we had agitated for this instead of for higher education .... Our missionaries are willing to allow caste, but they are not willing to admit the existence of an Indian Christian Community."

He was fully convinced of the soundness of these views and firmly believed that the attitude of the Bishops at the Bangalore Conference was dictated by a want of sympathy for, or by inability—only too natural in foreign prelates—to understand the feelings of the Indian Catholic Community. No wonder that he sided with the opposition, but he stoutly refused to adopt unconstitutional methods and nobly submitted when he realized by a better study of the rights of the Church in the matter of Catholic Action and Catholic discipline in general, the dangerous consequences of his principles. In his brochure "Anent the Bishops' Conference," Swamikannu Pillai quotes the canons and regulations of the Church on this point and sets the utterances of the speakers at the two meetings referred to above, on what, in their unsupported opinion, was Catholic constitutional law, alongside of the declarations of successive Popes in cases which must be called exact precedents, if indeed they were not identical.[1]

A few years later in his historical retrospect of the Catholic Indian Association he wrote: "For all administrative purposes and chiefly for the purpose of the elective communal franchise Protestants and Catholics are treated by the Government as well as by the public as one indistinguishable Indian Christian Community. But

[1] The Agitation anent the Bishops' Conference.

inasmuch as we are not permitted by the laws of the Church to form a single association designated Christian along with Protestants, the only way in which we can bring our grievances and sentiments effectively to the notice of Government and the Legislature is by concerted action parallel to that adopted by Protestants. It is evident that unless we keep alive and ever active the Catholic Indian Association, other communities would easily steal a march on us and there would be danger again in the future, as there has been experience in the past that the voice of the Protestant Association, speaking as the Indian Christian Association would be mistaken and taken for that of the Catholics plus the Protestants."

It has been stated that the greatest service rendered to the Catholic Indian Association of Southern India by Swamikannu Pillai was to prevent its being captured by the National Congress.[1] No doubt, the temptation to link religion to some political party is considerable for men eager to secure positive results and, at times eager to secure them with unreasonable haste. But Catholic Associations must steer clear of politics, especially of party politics. The Church, whose wisdom unites in a superior unity all the truths, the temporal application of which men must aim at in the sphere of politics, is obliged to oppose tendencies which would enslave her to the policy of one particular section of the political commonwealth. Being not only a perfect society, but a society superior to every human society, she absolutely refuses, by right and duty, to become the servant of a party and to conform to the shifting exigencies of politics. In the words of Leo XIII in his Encyclical "Sapientiae Christianae": "To seek to

1 The Catholic Leader for January 8, 1931.

implicate the Church in such party quarrels and claim to use her support the more easily to triumph over one's opponents is an improper abuse of religion." Whatever therefore be the attitude of individual members of the C. I. A. towards the policy of the National Congress, there can be but little room for doubt that Swamikannu Pillai saved its existence as a corporate Catholic body when he worked might and main to prevent it from identifying itself with the political parties which at present agitate the country.

We are told that after the death of his first wife, Mr. Swamikannu Pillai began to read the Lives of Captain Marçeau, General de Sonis and other prominent Catholic laymen. Surely at the time of the public confession of his error he must have been drawing strength and support from the life of another great leader Marc Sangnier who, when his vast organization, the 'Sillon'[1] was condemned by Pius X, declared in a letter that he was a Catholic, that he wished to remain a Catholic, and that, therefore, in obedience to the Pope he resigned his post as President of the Sillon. What a noble lesson, sadly forgotten in quite recent years by Charles Maurras,[2] these great Catholic leaders teach us!

1 The Sillon (The Furrow) was a monthly paper started in Paris in 1893. It soon developed into a powerful Catholic Association which adopted the title of its official organ. The efforts of the Sillon, laudable at the beginning, became at length a source of danger because it propagated unsound principles, divided Catholics and sought to identify the Church in France with a political party. It was condemned in 1910.

2 For similar reasons certain works of Charles Maurras and his newspaper L'Action Française were condemned by a Decree of the Holy Office dated the 29th January, 1914, and again by a Decree of the 29th December 1926.

CHAPTER X

THE END

It has been remarked that the passing away of Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai came as a shock. People in Madras, and throughout the Presidency, were surprised to hear on Friday morning, September 11, that he was no more, before the news of his sickness had reached them. They wondered how death could overtake so swiftly a man who had always looked hale and strong. But we learn from the family records that, at least within the privacy of the domestic walls, signs had not been wanting which pointed to an approaching end. Love, whom poets describe as blind, had charitably prevented both friends and relatives from reading aright the script of the mysterious finger and from anticipating the nearness of the calamity. Even the last year of his life ran its usual course at 'Roseville', each day coming to an end with its round of accustomed duties, yet leaving in the hearts of his near and dear ones the remembrance of many an anxious hour that awoke forebodings dimly felt, though never expressed.

We believe, however, that Swamikannu Pillai had a fairly clear presentiment of the impending end. In

November 1924 he had gone to Bangalore for much needed rest. He was robbed at the railway station of his despatch box and Rs. 100 in cash. The occurrence was thus commented upon by him in a letter to a friend. "Moreover I took the warning in another sense—'I shall come like a thief.' I never realized those words so seriously and ever since I have been more busy thinking of the guest who comes like a thief."

Even as far back as May 1924, he complains of several attacks of rheumatism and one of asthma adding that hereafter he must be St. Anthony's client for health more than for any other favour. In June we read of more attacks and he writes to one of his daughters: "My health, usually my last consideration, is just now, and has been since 1st May, when I had my first attack of asthma, my first consideration. The very day I arrived here, 23rd May, I had my second attack.....You are not so afraid of asthma, because you are young, and with the young asthma is only a guarantee of prolonged old age. But when it appears for the first time seriously at sixty, as it did in my case, doctors shake their heads because the heart may be affected as much as the lungs."

Dusty Madras, once so pleasant, has now become almost unendurable. He does not feel well in it and yearns for the open country and the pure air and pleasant hills of Mysore where he proposes to go three weeks every month when he is free from the Legislative Council. He feels happy to have made friends in Mysore and to be able to count on a palace house being placed at his disposal during his periodical visits but, he wistfully remarks: "It is a house belonging to the palace, not a palatial house." In November 1924, we find him again in need of rest; the

work of the Council has begun to tell heavily on him, and he makes up his mind to go to Bangalore. In the correspondence of the following months he returns to the topic of his health. It is evident that it has now become his primary concern. One thing, however, should be noted. He never utters a word of complaint; the allusions in his letters to his bodily ailments are merely historical, just as if he wrote a diary. There is no doubt, however, that he had no misgivings about the coming end. It looks as if he had been warned about it, and consoled by an internal inspiration. In a letter, dated 30th July 1925, from which we have already quoted, he writes to his Spiritual Director in St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly: "....On my return from the South I propose with your leave to make a triduum at Trichy. My health is very satisfactory from one important point of view, viz., the possibility of my reaching my eternal home soon. At 61 what do other points of view matter?..." Then after a few more words, he comes back to the idea of the retreat and adds almost prophetically; "I hope September will not be too late." September was too late!

He was taken ill on the night of the 17th of August with severe spasms but was able to attend Council the following day. On the 19th he was seized by another attack after which he felt very weak, and said it was impossible to attend to any work. On the 20th Lieut.-Col. F. F. Elwes examined him carefully and continued to pay regular visits. His heart was becoming weaker, and the Doctor advised perfect rest and good nourishment. It was with great difficulty that a man of his energy and activity could be prevailed upon to keep to his bed but he

was very patient, and despite the aversion he had for food, he took with child-like submission the nourishment brought to him.

It had by now become evident at home that his days were numbered. He could no longer help himself; any little effort exhausted him terribly. On the afternoon of Tuesday, September 8, he had a fresh attack of spasms, became very restless and experienced great difficulty in breathing. The words, 'my end is come', fell from his lips as he lovingly turned his eyes to the members of his family who were weeping bitterly by his bedside.

The Rev. Fr. S. Keet was sent for to administer the Last Sacraments of the Church which Swamikannu Pillai received with great devotion and piety. His beloved daughter Isabel, who had entered a Convent at Guntur, was summoned by telegram. On Wednesday he said only a few words and was so weak as not to be able to move a limb. He had a restless night but improved somewhat on Thursday and hopes revived a little, so much in fact that his daughter, Isabel, now Sister Stanislaus, took leave of him that day. He grew worse at 1 P. M., told his wife 'it was dark', and asked for the time. A little later he said he wished to receive Holy Communion again. Dr. P. F. Mathias, Superintendent of the Royapuram Hospital, brought Dr. M. R. Guruswamy who prescribed oxygen to aid his breathing and an injection of morphia. He was quite conscious and wanted to know what injection it was, but the Doctors did not tell him. The morphia put him to sleep. At 5.30 his wife tried to awake him in order to give him some nourishment. She found his teeth were clenched. An injection of strychnine was administered by Lieut.-Col.

Elwes at 7 o'clock. At 7.15 he opened his eyes, turned them to his dear ones standing round his bed, then closed them and fell asleep in Jesus. His passing away was that of a sincere and pious Christian, the crowning act of a very beautiful life.

It was observed that during the whole time of his illness he was calm and resigned. Those around him never read a sign in his looks that he was suffering so much. They could see he was absorbed in thoughts of God for he often asked them to recite the Psalms to him. The last prayer they read was the Hymn to Jesus Crucified which two years before he had translated from Latin into beautiful English. It is not difficult for us to imagine how fervently he followed the reading of the last two stanzas:

When my last hour has arrived
Be it not of Thee deprived;
In that fearful hour of severance,
Jesus, come to my deliverance
Without delay, dispel my fear.

When Thou bidd'st me leave my prison,
To my latest prayer listen:
Oh! my Love of sweet embraces,
Show Thyself with all Thy graces
On this Thy cross, oh Jesus dear!

Swamikannu Pillai had been during life much devoted to his family which, when the last hour came, he was anxious to see well-provided. Yet from the first days of his illness he ceased to worry himself about worldly affairs. In fact he did not once mention anything about

them, neither did he give his children the last advice. He had done his duty by them and now that he knew all was over, he had nothing more to say. But he left a noble example which stands perdurably before their eyes and the eyes of the country.

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On Friday evening the remains of Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai which had been all day laid out in state, dressed in his Presidential robes, were taken to Our Lady of Dolours Church, Royapuram, where an impressive funeral service took place. Rev. Fr. S. Keet officiated. The church was crowded with mourners. Besides the relatives of the deceased and many Catholics and the representatives of the clergy, the congregation included Executive Councillors, Ministers and other officials. The funeral cortege started from Our Lady of Dolours Church, at 5 p. m. and proceeded through Robinson Park, along Broadway and General Hospital Road to St. Patrick's Cemetery on the Island. He was laid to rest in the family vault. There was a large gathering present at the graveside. His Excellency Lord Goschen sent the following message to the Chief Minister, the Hon'ble the Raja of Panagal. "Lady Goschen and I learn with deepest regret of the death of Diwan Bahadur Swamikannu Pillai, whose loss will be widely felt throughout the presidency. Am requesting A. D. C. to represent me at the funeral." All the three Ministers were present. His Grace, Archbishop Aelen, who was unable to attend owing to ill-health, was represented by the Right Rev. A. J. Vander Burg, Vicar-General. Before the coffin was lowered into the

grave, the Hon'ble the Raja of Panagal and many others paid high tributes to the sterling qualities of mind and heart of the late Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai.

Government expressed its appreciation of him in the following Gazette Extraordinary.

"It is with the deepest regret that His Excellency the Governor-in-Council announces the death on the 10th instant of the Hon'ble Diwan Bahadur Louis Dominic Swamikannu Pillai, C. I. E., I. S. O., M. A., B. L. (Madras), LL. B. (London), President of the Madras Legislative Council.

"During a service of over 32 years under the Government, he held various important appointments, including those of Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Director of Agriculture, and Secretary to Government. After his retirement, he filled the post of Secretary to the Madras Legislative Council with conspicuous ability, and was nominated and was subsequently elected, President of the Council. His knowledge of Parliamentary procedure, of which he made a special study in England, his tact and genial temperament, specially fitted him for this distinguished and important position, in which he won the regard and respect of all parties.

"He devoted his spare time in the course of a busy life to the pursuit of learning, and to studies which ranged from shorthand writing to Greek and Latin literature, and Astronomy. His works on Indian

Chronology, which involved much original research, are of great value.

"The Government of Madras deplore the loss of a valuable public servant, and extend their deepest sympathy to the members of his family.

By order of the Governor-in-Council.

(*Signed*) A. Y. G. CAMPBELL,
Chief Secretary."

CHAPTER XI

HIS CHARACTER

At this stage of our narrative the reader will have formed an idea, we trust not too vague nor incomplete, of the main lineaments of the man whose likeness it was our object to portray. Action more than character was intentionally kept in the foreground, yet it was hardly possible to shut out rigorously every trait of the latter, and we believe that despite the touches on character liberally scattered through the various chapters of this book, there is room left for a study of Swamikannu Pillai as a man. It will be a kind of bird's-eye-view of the ground already traversed in which temple and palace, garden and hut must necessarily disappear to give prominence to the out-line and more important features of the landscape. Indeed a more personal description of our hero's intimate life seems necessary because the greatness of Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai lies not so much in what he did but in what he was;

Not on the vulgar mass
Called work, shall sentence pass.

He certainly had some initial advantage of splendid abilities with which to make a start. But even these, after all, are

not so rare in our days of cheap and universal education. Some of his contemporaries, both as scholars and as public men ranked not very far below him in mere wealth of intellectual attainments. The key to his much admired career must be searched for elsewhere. To the remarkable talents with which nature had endowed his mind he was fortunate to couple the best qualities of a truly noble heart. He lost none of the opportunities which education in a Jesuit College affords, especially to Catholic students, for the building up of character.

In appearance he was of medium height, strongly built and, at least at the time we became acquainted with him, rather corpulent and massive. He had a slight stoop of the shoulders, scarcely perceptible save by careful observation. His eyes were deeply set, penetrating and habitually pensive. The head was big, and bespoke a large-sized brain held, nowadays, to be an index of intelligence. All his movements were slow, and deliberate; they perfectly harmonized with his speech so distinguished, so literary and musical. The following anecdote will serve to fill in the picture. Once by invitation we called on him at Rose Ville in Royapuram. It was during the early hours of the forenoon and we found him in a small room, seated at the desk with two of his children leaning upon his knees. He was teaching them Latin from an old, to all appearance, an eighteenth century Virgil. The man, the circumstance of the children imbibing the rudiments of Latin from his lips, the whole atmosphere instinct with kindliness, parental love and scholarship, called suddenly forth to our mind the image of Blessed Thomas More, and to this day, by some undefinable law of association, the two images have not ceased to be called

up together. A charming passage from Sir Sidney Lee's 'Life of Thomas More' has since strengthened this association of the two great Catholic laymen. With due alterations of time, place and a few other particulars, which the reader can make for himself, the description fits Swamikannu Pillai almost to the letter.

"He lived with great simplicity, drinking little wine, avoiding expensive food, and dressing carelessly. He hated luxury or any sort of ostentation in his home life. At Chelsea he lived in patriarchal fashion, with his children and their husbands or wives and his grandchildren about him. He rarely missed attendance at the Chelsea Parish Church.... He encouraged all his household to study and read, and to practise liberal arts.... He was a charming host to congenial friends though he disliked games of chance, and eschewed dice and cards."

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From childhood Swamikannu Pillai was a time-usurer. He knew the value of each passing minute and with studious care formed the habit to turn it to the best account. As a boy of the F. A. classes he was already a voracious reader giving to books every moment he could steal from his play and amusements. The story is told that when there was a dramatic performance at the College young Swamikannu would quietly tuck a volume or two under his arm, proceed gravely to some remote nook of the house, and remain there poring over his favourite authors till the performance was over. Later, this habit became a second nature with him so that on

railway journeys or when waiting for a train he was frequently seen with a book, generally a classic, from which he memorized the most beautiful passages. To one who asked him how he could spare time for the writing and printing of so many books, he replied: "I work at them at all times but in a special manner between 9 and 12 p. m. and even 1 a. m. That's my hobby, and it helps me to forget my cares. They are the only hours I enjoy rest and peace."

Memorizing had become an instinct with him, a thing of joy. Small wonder that from his College days he could pass examinations at will and had begun to master quite a number of languages. His mind had thus become steeped in the literature of the ancients from which, as well as from the rich fund of anecdotes and stories at his command, he was always ready to quote and adorn his conversation. Cards, he would say, seeking an excuse for his aversion to them, were invented in France for the amusement of a mad king. To someone who had quoted the line: 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown', he promptly remarked with a shrewd smile that 'Kings as a rule, do not commit suicide.' This calls up to memory another peculiarity of the genius of Swamikunnu Pillai. He had a liking for what was antiquated and archaic, for the curiosities of literature and science. Such out of the way bits of knowledge did not form part of the main stream of erudition that flowed from his ever active brain. Yet they were a distinctive feature of it. From this we can explain how, in the midst of deeper studies, he would find time and pleasure to develop a special method of Mnemonics or improve Pitman's system of Shorthand,

Even the Ephemeris may, to some extent, seem a feat and a freak in Mathematics. Originality is undoubtedly a factor of genius but, through excess and abuse, it can become a disease unfitting the mind for work of undisputed greatness. There was no trace of such imperfection in the originality of Swamikannu Pillai. It helped to set off his scholarship and his vast erudition to better advantage.

He was a gentleman, a *gentle man*, to his finger tips. Everyone who knew Swamikannu Pillai, nay everyone who even casually met him, would easily avow that this was the impression he received from his acquaintance. As his friend Mr. M. Ruthnaswamy wrote: "He was modest to the point of self suppression, shy and reserved at first approach but genuinely cordial on deeper acquaintance, pure in private life and a puritan in his public career, animated by the spirit of sacrifice for those who were near and dear to him, he passed through the disappointments and troubles of public life with a lofty courage and an unbreakable trust in God." The worth of these remarks will be even greater if we bear in mind that Swamikannu Pillai was no Stoic dwelling apart with his philosophy; he was no Wordsworth content to commune with nature, but had to deal with men of the world and rub shoulders with them. A public career is no bed of roses in which to lie for much solitary contemplation. The Council Hall, in a special manner, is the greatest arena for the play of character. And Swamikannu Pillai as Secretary and President of the Legislative Council never deviated from fine manners and courtesy. He had an imperturbable temper, and there has been not a single occasion on which even momentarily he lost his self-control or behaved discourteously. Such trials occurred not

infrequently when the speaker was Mr. S. Satyamurthi, a distinguished Madras orator and acid test of the President's chair and of the bureaucratic temper.

Mr. Swamikannu Pillai was by nature shy and reserved withal. Free and straightforward in the discharge of the duties attached to his office he anxiously shrank into himself from the hard world. He was ever ill at ease in high society and longed to escape back to the bosom of his family or to the intimate conversation of a few friends. He was too much of a scholar to move freely on the picturesque stage of Government House and of the Madras aristocracy, and too dignified, perhaps too respectful, to adopt on it the simple style and quaint humour that were the charms of his talk with friends and acquaintances. This reminds us of another trait in the character of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai—his extreme humility which, coupled with his geniality and modesty, conveyed no idea of his intellectual attainments and social position to those, who happened not to know him.

A story related by Sir K. Venkata Reddy Naidu in a speech supporting the resolution of condolence in the Legislative Council illustrates our remarks. During Swamikannu Pillai's last visit to England, it happened that as he was once entering the House of Commons, some high personage wished to know whether he was an African. He gave no reply and when asked in private the reason of his silence said that there was no difference between man and man, and that he felt no shame in passing for an African. On another occasion, when he was the guest of the Speaker of the House of Commons, a lady of rank, who had also been invited, inquired of

him whether he could speak English to which he was satisfied to give an affirmative answer. This good lady had soon an opportunity to hear Swamikannu Pillai deliver a speech, and was moreover informed that there were few European languages which her new Indian friend was not acquainted with. We doubt not but she must have realized that humility is a virtue from which she had still a few things to learn. Humility and courtesy are not so common, nowadays, as many people would have it. In him they were not mere politeness, a quality much more fashionable and, often enough, a cloak to cover a multitude of sins of selfishness. The courtesy and humility of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai were old-fashioned and genuine. They were an expression of nobility, a characteristic of the fine soul, inseparable from kindliness and gentleness, and the love of ordered beauty, and the understanding of the pleasure and pain of others. Of a truth, Newman's definition of a gentleman that 'he is one who never inflicts pain,' fitted him like a glove.

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Of his mental gifts and scholarly attainments enough has been said to bring home to the reader how predominantly intellect entered into his character. We have likewise dealt, at some length, with his religious faith and staunch adherence to the Catholic Church. On this subject, however, we may be permitted a few remarks which have purposely been held back as more appropriate to this chapter. Swamikannu Pillai was, undoubtedly, a faithful son of the Church. He readily assented to all

her dogmas, recognized her supreme authority and infallible teaching in all matters concerning faith and morals and would never tolerate any view or opinion not in consonance with it. But then, as a Catholic knows, there still remains a wide range of subjects, social and political, scientific and religious, in which every man is at liberty to use his own judgment. The Church does not set unnecessary fetters to human intelligence; it guides it pointing with unerring finger to the perennial truths of Natural and Divine Law as to many landmarks in our journey of discovery. She places in the hands of the Catholic a measuring rod with which to test and probe the value of the so-called 'finds' of knowledge. Swamikannu Pillai saw intuitively that without such a rod there could not be a standard of measurement; no truths but only the psychical experience in the consciousness of each individual.

Yet he was wide awake to the claims of reason and kept an open mind upon the burning problems of the day. To give an instance: "Thou shalt not steal" is a command which no Christian can call into question by whatever name the theft be camouflaged, but should a thief be hanged? Or should he go before a Probation Officer and be merely put on his honour to be of good behaviour henceforth? Again, that every man has a claim to a living wage, seems a corollary of natural justice, but what shall be the living wage in pounds, shillings and pence for England, France, Germany or India? Swamikannu Pillai was too intellectual not to have views and opinions on such concrete questions of positive law and, at times, his views and opinions were at variance with those of other Catholic leaders, lay and ecclesiastic. On

the whole, however, he kept such ideas to himself and seldom stepped into the arena of discussion unless invited to do so.

Politics is a most unprofitable science though very fashionable. To eschew politics from one's life, especially in modern India, is almost as difficult as to live without breathing. Many admirers of Mr. Swamikannu Pillai would fain wish us to be silent on this topic. He was throughout a Government servant, and this too on the side of the hated bureaucracy. We are pledged to the study of a character and do not wish to offer a solution of problems which lie altoghter outside the orbit of our ken as well as of this biographical sketch. Let us, however, make a distinction between a politician and a patriot. The former Swamikannu Pillai was not; the latter he was most ardently. He loved India as very few of our modern politicians love it, and his heart went out to her as the heart of a babe goes out to its mother. His studies and publications, his manner of life, his thoughts and affections, his regard for the people and the interest he took in their welfare, proclaim from the housetops Swamikannu Pillai's true and sincere patriotism. Of course there was no ostentation, no jingoism in it. As indicated in the programme of Catholic Action we have referred to elsewhere, he believed in deeds more than in words. The social and industrial aspect of the country's progress appealed to him more strongly than the political one, for of politics, we suspect, he thought she had more than her meed. His lot, moreover, had been from the start cast on the side of Government. He was a constitutional home-ruler, an advanced conservative, if you wish, of the school of Gokhale to which he belonged by age, education

and temperament. He was born too early to be a disciple of the political philosophy of Gandhi. Yet, if one cares to understand him thoroughly, one must in the end, fall back upon those qualities of reticence and reserve which constitute an integral part of his character. He was one of those who do not like to hear the music of their own voice and in politics, especially, he loved a 'god-like luxury of silence.'

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The last trait of Swamikannu Pillai's character—his domestic virtues and love of his family—has been charmingly dealt with in a letter which appeared in the press, by one of his most favoured children. We would fain reprint it as it stands, but fear lest it should lead us to a certain amount of repetition. That portion of it, which portrays his domestic life, is so sweet and so feelingly written, that we reproduce it as a fitting close to this chapter and to this Biography.

> "As you have expressed a desire to get some details about the domestic life of my beloved father, I shall just mention the personal experiences of a child who ever was so dear to him. My first experience of him was the great love he had for his children. Nothing which could increase their innocent pleasure would he deprive them of at any cost whatsoever to his personal convenience or expenditure. I say innocent, because what I shall state hereafter will prove that he was never an over-indulgent father.

He would come home late at night in those days, perhaps somewhere after eight. But we, his little ones, could not sleep without seeing him for the evening. Even if sleep closed our eyes, we would wake up again at the announcement of his coming and rush to the gate to welcome him. Sleep would fly. But there often would be people waiting to see him. If they came on business matters he sent them away quickly, as eager to listen to our childish joys and sorrows and happenings of the day as we were to prattle out our stories. Our first exchange of news being over, we would say our prayers. After that we went for supper. He would finish his frugal repast quickly and would keep us amused with anecdotes from his rich fund of sparkling humour. More than once he told us that he was never happier than when surrounded only by his family. He was never in a hurry to rise from table after supper, because that was the only time for our confidential and mutual chats. Although he was most uninterfering, each one of us felt he must know everything. That was all the more reason why we felt that he must know all our secrets.

"After supper when he rose to go to his office room, again we his darling little ones would follow him for some more 'robber stories', 'fairy tales', 'nursery rhymes', or 'baby poems.' By this time nature would really assert herself and sleep would clasp us tight in her angry arms and weigh down our tired lids, so much so, an aunt or elder sister would have to carry us to bed. Even then if we woke on

the way we would tear ourselves back to the arms of our loving father. Perhaps he would come himself to put us to bed. He used his original powers to amuse his darlings at home, as much as to compose great works. Each toy and sweet had a story of its own. So it was not only gratifying our sweet teeth but also feeding our baby intellect with new ideas. Father was our great storehouse of Nursery Rhymes. Later on I used to wonder whether he did not think them too insignificant to be retained in his memory side by side with all the greater things. I was nearly forgetting to say that he never failed to supply us with these stories and Nursery Rhymes in their usual garb of Picture Books. Those books are gone long ago and the dear Story-Teller himself has since closed his sweet eyes forever to the fleeting pleasures of this mortal world."

APPENDIX

AN UNPUBLISHED POEM

PRO REGE, GREGE, LEGE*

(For King, Country and Law)

God save our gracious King!
Long live our noble King!
God save the King!
Hear England's, India's prayer!
From peril, fear and snare,
Whatever foes may dare,
God save the King!

God Save our Empire—State
From perils small and great
Of land, sea, air!
In cities, towns and marts,
In all the Empire's parts,
In many million hearts
Resounds the prayer.

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* This poem was found among the mss. of Swamikannu Pillai. It is written on a foolscap sheet which bears the following words at the top: "Railway train to Madura, 19-12-'14, 10 p. m. The poem was evidently written on December 12, 1914, during a night railway journey to Madura at the time when Swamikannu Pillai was Registrar of Co-operative Societies. The fifth line of the fourth stanza, "With muffled Christmas chimes," is, of course, suggested by the approaching Christmas day.

Since man on earth appeared,
Since first the tomb was reared,
Since death's alarms
First struck in hearts dismay,
Has never been such fray:
For earth beholds to-day
A world in arms.

Death's Angel every hour
Mows down the richest flower
Of every race:
Fair lands and fertile climes!
With muffled Christmas chimes
Ye mourn the cruel times;
And many a face

Of dearest kith and kin
Grim Death hath garnered in:
And yet take heart!
Was ever France so fair?
For Britain's best are there,
With India's sons who bear
Nobly their part.

England hath pledged her hand
By chivalry to stand,
Witness the Lord!
Hearts that in union beat!
Hands that each other greet!
From many lands ye meet
To keep the word.

From clash of sword and steel
From cannon's thunder-peal,
    Springs a new fire!
Our country's, Empire's cause
Is holier than it was:
A higher law than laws
    Binds son and sire;

Binds families and friends,
Seals rights and wrongs amends;
    In death is life!
From Eastern, Western end
The Empire's sons attend
And creed and colour blend
    In friendly strife.

For all our friends to-day,
O God! we humbly pray:
    Help us, O Lord!
We trust our cause is thine,
And trusting, we combine:
Let Freedom fairer shine
    For peace restored.

APPENDIX

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

OF

DIWAN BAHADUR L. D. SWAMIKANNU PILLAI

(1) Phonal Shorthand, 1909.

(2) Secret of Memory, 1909.

(3) Indian Chronology, 1911; 2nd Edn. 1922.

(4) Indian Ephemeris A. D. 1800–2000; published 1915; 2nd Edn. 1922.

(5) Indian Ephemeris A. D. 700—1800, 6 Vols. (Madras Government publication 1922).

(6) Credibility of Indian Astrology, 1922.

(7) Maximum Age of Dhruva Nadi, 1923.

(8) Comprehensive Tables for Indian Chronology, 1924.

(9) Panchang and Horoscope
or
The Indian Calendar and Indian Astrology, 1925.

MINOR PUBLICATIONS

(1) Various articles in Indian Antiquary and Epigraphia on Indian Chronology.

(2) Notes on Hindu Astrology, 1922.

(3) Impressions on the Working of the House of Commons (a Lecture).

(4) The Agitation anent the Bishop's Conference, 1917.

(5) Catholic Action by G. Palau, S. J., (a Translation) 1918.

(6) The Prayer of St. Bernard to Jesus Crucified 1923 (in verse).

(7) India and Modernism.